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DRAGON™

A Dungeons & Dragons® Roleplaying Game Supplement

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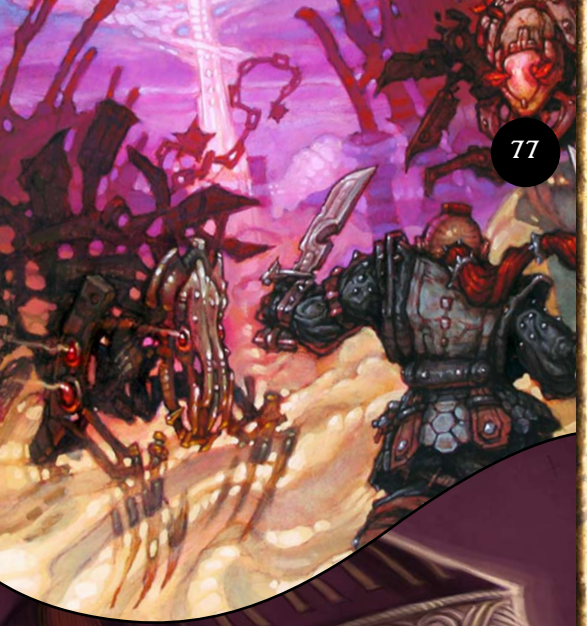

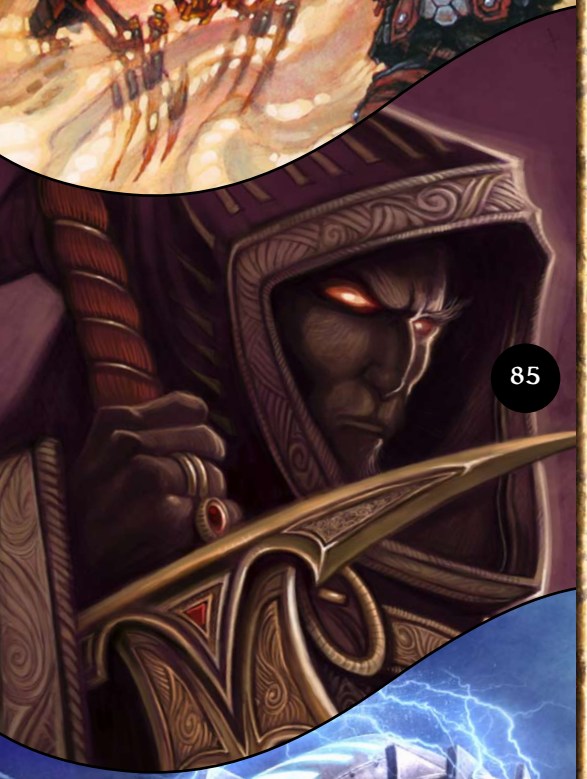

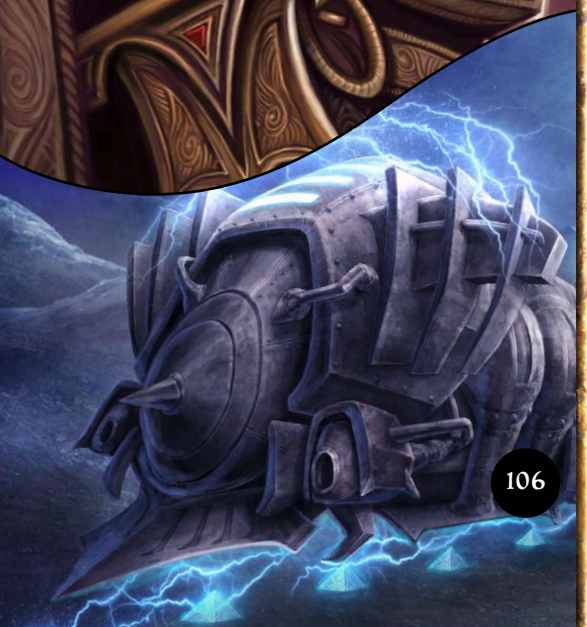

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Players 1, Dungeon Masters 1

Dragon and *Dungeon* have been ticking along for many years now, with only a few editorial direction changes to speak of, most of them to do with D&D edition changes. *Dungeon* has traditionally offered D&D adventures, while *Dragon* has been the place to go for all sorts of DM- and player-focused articles related to the D&D game. As someone who recently passed the ten-year benchmark working on D&D (most of it on these magazines), I'm very respectful of the magazines' legacy, as is the rest of Wizards of the Coast. Even with the transition to a digital format, the content—and more important to this discussion, where it lived—remained the same.

But now, we have a year of 4th Edition under our belts, and we've taken a good, hard look at the magazines and the content we release. In a few months (we're not ready to talk about specific dates yet), we're going to refocus the content of *Dragon* and *Dungeon* with the goal of giving players and DMs exciting and useful 4th Edition material in a clear-cut, intuitive way. In the new world order, *Dragon* will become the hub for all your player needs, and *Dungeon* will become the hub for all your DM needs.

In addition to presenting D&D adventures of varying lengths as well as DM advice columns such as "Dungeoncraft" and "Save My Game," *Dungeon* will also include recurring features for DMs that have traditionally been under *Dragon*'s aegis. Ecologies, Demonomicons, Bestiaries—they've been in *Dragon* because they've always been there, but not because they *should* be.

Dragon will, in turn, retain its player-focused general features, and we'll begin a monthly series of meaty feature articles that home in on individual classes. These features will be aimed at giving players new tools and exciting options for their characters, and we'll run several of them each month. This means players of every class will be able to find multiple articles dedicated to improving their experience at the table.

This change represents a shift in how we organize our content—something that will be easy to explain to new players while still preserving the breadth of material readers are accustomed to seeing. Such a change (*Dungeon* for DMs, *Dragon* for players) has been discussed for years, dating back to the early days of 3rd Edition, but never carried out for a multitude of reasons. Chief among them was the concern over what would happen to the *Dragon* subscription and sales numbers once there was no longer any reason for DMs to buy it. *Dragon* was always the more popular magazine, since it appealed to DMs and players alike. At least one person at the table each month would find something of interest. But now that the magazines both come with one subscription, that reason has gone the way of the gorbel.

It sounds like a bigger deal than it really is, because the only place you'll see a difference is in your monthly compilations or in our online archives. This shift mimics a core 4th Edition goal we've already applied to print and accessory products, which strive to clearly describe whether they're intended for DM or player use. Just as you won't see paragon paths in a *Dungeon Master's Guide* or world-building information in a *Player's Handbook*, all subscribers will clearly know what they're getting when they download *Dragon* or *Dungeon* content.

What this does *not* mean is a reduction in the overall volume of content each month. If anything, we'll be bringing you *more* exclusive content as a *D&D Insider*. All your favorites will still be around, and we'll continue to listen to your input as well. We'll have more information on our ever-evolving content plans in the coming weeks, but this is my big announcement for the month. Check back with us again soon for more *D&D Insider* news.

If you have any comments or questions, feel free to drop us a line at dndinsider@wizards.com. We'd love to hear from you.

Keepers of the Celestian Order

by Matthew Sernett

Illustrations by Kerem Beyit

Some secrets you should learn only when you're ready, and some exist that none should know. Surely the world and the planes hold such hidden and dangerous truths, but no place holds so many as the mysterious Far Realm, and no creatures bear so much perilous knowledge as its denizens. Many who learn of the Far Realm go mad. Others taste its foulness and hunger for more, no doubt due to a madness already within them. Yet some who wade into a shallow understanding of the place beyond space stand firm at the shores of its unfathomable depths. The greatest among them would halt the tide of wrongness from that place, though all its evils might crash against them in endless waves. These are the members of the Celestian Order, and they are the light of the world.

Be they heroes, scoundrels, or those who hide true villainy in their hearts, the members of the Celestian Order serve to protect the world from the dangers of the Far Realm and from the knowledge that would open more paths to that terrible place. As an organization, they put no faith in the gods who control the world, and they despise its primordial creators who would destroy it. Instead, they ally themselves with myriad primal spirits, because despite the numerous motives such spirits have, they all oppose the alien influence of the Far Realm.

This article presents an organization and campaign arc concept for your game to dovetail with the idea of the primal power source expressed in *Player's Handbook*® 2. In addition, it provides several powers for the *Player's Handbook*® classes that can help to give those PCs a thematic connection to the primal power source or the goals of the Celestian Order. Think of

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Highlighting the Primal Power Source

If you want to incorporate the primal power source into your game or bring it more to the fore, you can do better than have the PCs meet druids while wandering the woods. Elements of adventures and themes in the campaign can give players a strong connection with the idea of primal power even if none of your friends play a character of a class from *Player's Handbook*® 2.

Meet the primal spirits. This tactic anthropomorphizes the power source and gives the players an obvious cue for the power source's involvement in the world. The great thing about this idea is that it lacks boundaries. You can make up your own primal spirit and give it whatever powers and personality you like. The players likely lack specific expectations about the primal spirits—unlike the gods—so you have lots of room for your own creativity and opportunities to surprise them. You might even have the PCs meet several primal spirits, each with their own ideas about how the PCs can best help the world. Some might even oppose the PCs as dangers to the world.

The enemy of my enemy is my friend. This old saying presents some excellent roleplaying opportunities. When imminent destruction threatens the world, fighting over who controls it becomes ridiculous. Long-time foes and potential new enemies can set aside their differences to work with the PCs. It might be a temporary truce with a sudden and inevitable betrayal, or the players might find teaming up with an enemy puts that person on the path to redemption. Either way, being on the same side as yuan-ti, Vecna cultists, or an ancient red dragon might be one of the most memorable parts of the campaign.

It's time to save the world . . . again. Players sometimes laugh about how often it seems like their characters are called upon to prevent disaster, but in a campaign with a strong primal theme, it should be no joke. It's fun to play the role of the world's champions. Of course, you should have adventures with other goals, and when someone asks the PCs who they are, they should be able to say with confidence, "We're the ones who save the world."

If they fail, they fail big. When something threatens the world (and thus the primal power source), and PCs fail to stop it, the players should see the effect. That doesn't mean you have to tear the planet apart, but if the gate to the Far Realm opens, it should do more than spit out a few aberrant creatures. Maybe a river becomes poison, and any creature that drinks from it mutates and goes mad. When a primordial escapes its prison, perhaps the seas rise and cataclysmically alter the coastlines of the world. This puts a lot of pressure on the PCs, but it hammers home how high the stakes are and puts the importance of the primal power source's balancing role into perspective.

the Celestian Order like the Illuminati for the good guys. They're a secret society that opposes Far Realm elements in the campaign in a way much like heroes of Lovecraft fiction stand against the horrors of the Cthulhu mythos. Even if this particular idea doesn't suit your tastes, the article's game elements and advice should be fun additions to your game.

The Origins of the Celestian Order

As the ancient empires of Bael Turath and Arkhosia clashed for the final time, a small cadre of people brought together by chance came into knowledge of a Far Realm invasion and felt compelled to oppose it. The sane survivors—a deva courtier, a tiefling witch, an eladrin scholar, a dragonborn soldier, and a masked human known only as "the Jack of Swords"—swore an oath never to reveal what they had heard and seen, and they also resolved to find a way to preserve their knowledge for the next time the world might need it, though all society might fall and dissolve. To keep alive their hopes despite the coming dark age, they created separate organizations that were linked together as a secret society dedicated to protecting the world from the Far Realm, regardless of whether what was left was worth saving.

These five survived the war that ruined the empires of the world, and perhaps due to a taint of the very place they sought to combat, most lived far longer than nature would allow. Under their guidance, the Celestian Order emerged. Though most of its founders are now dead, the organization continues its hidden battle against the creatures and influences that should not be, and it does so in fractured branches that share a similar creed. Members of the Celestian Order might be of any race or creed, and they could exist at any level of society. Membership in the organization comes in phases, with potential members being inducted into layers of secret societies as their intentions and trustworthiness are put to the test. The

members of these lower-level cabals, cults, and secret orders exist as tools for the Celestian Order. Typically, only one or two senior members of any given subsidiary group know its true purpose, and even these leaders might misunderstand the nature of those who give them orders. Only those who are worthy learn the whole truth of the Celestian Order—only truly heroic individuals such as the PCs.

Against the Far Realm

In this campaign arc, the PCs become members of the Celestian Order and join its cause against the Far Realm, eventually claiming leadership of the secret society.

Heroic Tier: The Wayfinders

The campaign begins with the PCs at the signing of a treaty to end a 40-year war between several powerful city-states. The treaty is being held with the aid of a circle of mystics—using all sorts of nonmartial powers—known as the Order of the Riven Stone in the shadow of the monolith that gives the group their name. The mystics remained neutral in the conflict but fought any large-scale destruction of the wilderness. Tensions are high, but it looks like a generation of conflict will soon end.

The players should create characters who have good reason to be at the signing of the treaty. One might be a prince of one of the city-states or an aid to one of the generals of the armies. A PC could be a soldier in the army granted the honor of guarding one of the diplomats, or maybe the character is the daughter of one of the mystics. You can craft the city-states involved in the conflict to match the characters the players create. Thus, a halfling PC might mean that a halfling community acted as waterway mercenaries that fought for every side over the course of the war. A dwarf PC might be from a dwarven hold drawn into the conflict for providing weapons to the various forces.

On the night of the treaty's signing, the stars shine especially bright and beautiful in the sky. This cheers ambassadors of all the sides since they see it as a good omen. The mood is celebratory despite the tense negotiations of the past week, but the PCs notice that the mystics look tense, and their leaders whisper among themselves and occasionally glance at the stars as if concerned. The PCs who bring this up with their leaders are either asked to investigate, or are ignored and forced to check things out on their own. The treaty is nearly signed, and no one else wants to spend time worrying about the stars or what the mystics think of them.

The PCs' investigations lead them to meet one another in the star shadow of the Riven Stone where a few mystics are in consultation. The PCs are confronted for eavesdropping, and at that moment lightning flashes from the clear sky to strike the Stone. When their vision clears, the Riven Stone—a tall monolith covered in swirling carvings and split in two vertical halves for as long as any can remember—is whole, and scattered about are fell taints (*Monster Manual II*) that attack. Chaos erupts as each camp attempts to ascertain from whom the attack comes. Accusations fly as the parties make a fighting withdrawal, and the mystics beg the PCs to stay. They say every last one of the strange creatures must be slain lest worse come, and the mystics need protection as they perform a ritual that will split the stone once again.

The mood is celebratory despite the tense negotiations of the past week, but the PCs notice that the mystics look tense, and their leaders whisper among themselves and occasionally glance at the stars as if concerned.

The PCs do their best, but at a crucial moment, an old eladrin mystic named Athanil breaks the circle and the ritual fails. An enormous pulse of green light from the stone knocks the PCs prone and blows the remaining fell taints into the distance like leaves on the wind. Athanil disappears with the fell taints, and the other mystics who attempted the ritual are dead, leaving the PCs alone.

When the PCs attempt to reconnect with their people, the city-states are in a state of paranoid antagonism, making PCs unwelcome outside their own states. Each is declared an outlaw. Also, each city-state, for some reason, considers the PCs complicit in the attack or derelict in duty. The only way the PCs can clear their names is to find Athanil, but no trail can be found.

The PCs are hunted, and the only person willing to give them a chance is a merchant-adventurer named Davian Marcus. He's a member of a trailblazing trade guild known as the Wayfinders, and he has come from a distant land to open up trade routes. Although hard-bitten, he is generous to a fault. After the PCs help him out of a bind, he takes them on as employees. He also gives them *Wayfinder badges*, magic tokens that allow the PCs to talk to Davian and one another (see "The Badges" later in this article). As members of the Wayfinders, the PCs can take on new identities and search for the eladrin mystic as they accompany Davian on his travels.

For the rest of heroic tier, the PCs go on various adventures as they travel with Davian or complete tasks for him. The PCs seek out lost trade roads, eliminate threats from the wilds, meet strange peoples, and discover outposts of civilization once cut off from the world. Occasionally they encounter aberrant creatures, and when they do, a fell taint is almost always nearby. The PCs learn more about the mystic during their quests, and Davian seems as interested in their success as they are.

Paragon Tier: Concord of Swords

While the PCs are away, Athanil attacks Davian's caravan. The PCs return to find Davian near death. When revived, he describes how Athanil led a force from one of the PCs' home states to attack the caravan, and he took from Davian a map. Davian admits to the PCs that the eladrin and he are known to one another. The Order of the Riven Stone and the Wayfinders are both part of a larger organization dedicated to peaceful interactions between existing states in the world. It is called the Concord of Swords, and the PCs have unwittingly been doing their work. Athanil turned traitor and appears to be using the guild's resources for his own gain.

Davian Marcus is ashamed for hiding the truth from the PCs, and now he knows where Athanil is going. He provides that information to the PCs, telling them that Athanil is going to a swamp to claim a magic warship called *Hand of Fate* (see "Hand of Fate" later in this article). He believes that Athanil has promised the ship's aid in a conflict between the city-states. If they want to avert war and regain their good names, they must stop Athanil and bring him to justice.

Davian draws the PCs a copy of the map from memory, and the PCs must go on an adventure to confront Athanil and claim the ship. On the way, the PCs find the bodies of those Athanil used to attack Davian. The mystic has new friends: the swamp's native grells and chuuls, and foulspawn made from the survivors of his betrayal. Athanil has with him a magic tome written in Deep Speech that he uses to terrible effect upon the PCs and the environment before he is defeated. See the "The Wailing Tome" section later in this article for ideas of what this book might be like.

With Athanil dead or in tow, the characters can sail or fly *Hand of Fate* to the battlefields where the conflict between their city-states already rages. After a few dangerous battlefield encounters, they make peace between the sides with the aid of a deva diplomat named Aleesa, who has been pleading for peace for some time. They must then deliver their message to the other warring groups, perhaps performing quests on those groups' behalf.

Once their good names and positions are restored, and the new peace treaty is signed, Aleesa comes to the PCs at the height of the celebrations. She reveals that she is a member of the Concord of Swords, and the group has need of the PCs' skills. War looms in a distant land because Athanil's plots are still having their effects, and with *Hand of Fate*, the PCs are the only ones who can travel there fast enough to save countless lives. She begs the PCs to become full members of the Concord of Swords, promising to tell them more of the organization's contacts and resources after they prevent the war. When the PCs agree, their Wayfinder badges transform, adopting the shape of the symbol of the Concord and gaining additional magic (see "The Badges").

The players should see how varied and full of wonders the world is, and their adventures should put them in contact with helpful primal spirits.

For much of paragon tier, the PCs use *Hand of Fate* to fly across their world and go on various adventures. They serve as the premier weapon of the Concord of Swords, whose members request their aid and investigations rather than giving them orders. Adventure themes should include thwarting evil warlords, stopping villains from gaining items of power, and preventing invasions. The players should see how varied and full of wonders the world is, and their adventures should put them in contact with helpful primal spirits. As with the heroic tier, the PCs should often meet aberrant creatures as foes. The adventures have hints that their separate battles against these foes are somehow linked.

Epic Tier: The Celestian Order

Just after PCs enter epic tier, the stars shine brightly over the world—just as they had the night of the treaty. When the characters attempt to make contact with other members of the Concord of Swords, they find them missing or dead. Shortly thereafter, well-equipped brigands on flying mounts attack the PCs. They seek the *Wailing Tome*, and if any PC reads part of it, they attempt to kidnap that character. The brigands are part of the Celestian Order who are striving to control all knowledge of the Far Realm.

During the attack, a brigand lets slip that Aleesa is dead, and the characters can expect no help from her. This is true, but Aleesa was a reincarnation of the founding member of the Celestian Order, and that founding member took precautions. Aleesa's new self appears to the PCs not long after the attack. The male deva, now named Baran, found a crystal upon his awakening, and

it told him what to do if the stars were in the peculiar alignment they are now. Having retained some memories of the PCs, Baran knew that the crystal should be brought to them. Baran then gives the characters the crystal, telling them that only a primal spirit can unlock its other secrets. As soon as the PCs bring it aboard *Hand of Fate*, the Wayfinder spirit within the ship awakens and appears as a ghostly image. With the Wayfinder's help, the characters learn a rough history of the Celestian Order up to shortly before the founding deva's death. They come to know that the Concord of Swords is merely part of the Celestian Order, a group dedicated to preparing the world to fight a Far Realm invasion—while keeping the Far Realm a secret because of how dangerous knowledge of the place can be. The message ends with a plea to the PCs to take up the cause of the Celestian Order and lead the group now that Aleesa is dead.

Denizens of the Far Realm are pounding on the doors of creation, and the brightened stars denote that the process of a Far Realm invasion has begun. When the PCs resolve to do so, their badges change yet again (see "The Badges," below).

Over the course of the epic tier, elements of the Celestian Order come to the PC after being approached by primal spirits and informed of the PCs' acceptance of leadership. They reveal more about the organization and the resources the PCs can marshal to end the civil war in its ranks. A wing of the Celestian Order, lead by the death knight known as the Jack of Swords, is attempting to control who can defend themselves from the coming Far Realm incursion so that he can make himself lord of the world that remains. At the same time, the world is awakening to the threat posed by the Far Realm, and the PCs need to help it prepare for battle.

Adventures at this tier include excursions the Shadowfell and Feywild. As mirrors to the world, they are already under assault by the Far Realm, which makes breaking into the world easier. The characters might also venture to the Astral Sea to convince the gods or their servants to help, and go to the Elemental Chaos to stop forces there from aiding the invasion. Ultimately, the PCs must return to the Riven Stone and face the most horrifying powers of the invasion while they attempt a ritual to destroy the Riven Stone and prevent the Far Realm from polluting the world.

4th Edition Far Realm Adventures

If you run the campaign arc described in this article, or if you're just looking for Far Realm fun, you might find the following published adventures handy. Although not all deal directly with the Far Realm, all make your job easier by including aberrant creatures that you can connect to the Far Realm.

Adventure	Source	Level
"Echoes of Thunderspire Labyrinth"	*Dungeon* #156	6th
Pyramid of Shadows	H3	7th
"The Last Breaths of Ashenport"	*Dungeon* #156	8th
"Sleeper in the Tomb of Dreams"	*Dungeon* #155	8th
"Touch of Madness"	*Dungeon* #161	10th
King of the Trollhaunt Warrens	P1	11th
"Depths of Madness"	*Dungeon* #162	11th
"Brink of Madness"	*Dungeon* #163	13th
"Depths of Avarice"	*Dungeon* #157	13th
"Sea Reavers of the Shrouded Crags"	*Dungeon* #158	15th
"Ziggurat Beyond Time"	*Dungeon* #159	21st

The Badges

The badges the PCs receive from Davian Marcus are magic items attuned to one another and the one Davian wears. These badges exist to provide the characters with emblems of their affiliation that give benefits as the PCs increase in level. Not intended to fit into the normal treasure structure, they are instead tools to facilitate campaign activities. The badges start out as heroic items, and they increase in power when the PCs reach a pivotal point in the campaign early in each upper tier. Each such badge functions only in accordance with its wearer's level and tier.

Heroic Badge: These badges the PCs wear are initially attuned to each other and to one carried by Davian Marcus. Although they are expensive, they allow the players to freely share information with one another regardless of distance in the world. This is something that often happens naturally at the game table because it can be difficult to separate player knowledge from character knowledge. Having all the PCs have these items provides an in-game outlet for this natural behavior. It also presents interesting role-playing opportunities when someone doesn't answer a badge call or when an urgent communication comes in the middle of another crisis. A heroic-tier badge is the equivalent of a 3rd-level magic item.

Paragon Badge: The badges take on the form of the Concord of Swords symbol and gain additional power. One reason for this is that you're putting the PCs on a flying ship for much of paragon tier, so it seems cruel to have a fall mean instant death.

Epic Badge: When the badges take the form of the Celestian Order symbol, they give each wearer more power that is invaluable against aberrant foes.

Wayfinder Badge

This simple gold brooch has a shape that indicates your affiliation with a secret society.

Wondrous Item

Power (Heroic; Encounter): Standard Action. You can send a short message to a person you know who possesses a *Wayfinder badge* attuned to yours, as long as the target is on the same plane.

Paragon: The power becomes at-will, and the target need not be on the same plane.

Epic: All primal spirits the wearer knows of are considered to have attuned *Wayfinder badges* and are thus eligible targets for this power.

Power (Paragon; At-Will ✦ Teleportation): Free Action. Triggered if you fall off *Hand of Fate.* You arrive on the deck of *Hand of Fate* in a square of your choice.

Power (Paragon; Daily ✦ Teleportation): Move Action. An allied character can trigger it if you are unconscious or helpless. The ally can trigger this effect even if he or she lacks line of sight or line of effect to you, and from up to 1 mile away. You teleport to the deck of *Hand of Fate* in a square of your choice.

Property (Epic): You gain a +2 bonus to Perception checks against aberrant creatures, as well as a + 2 bonus to saving throws against any effect an aberrant creature imposes on you.

Hand of Fate

Hand of Fate looks like a seaworthy caravel of high quality. Its gilded name obviously refers to the enormous skeletal hand set on the prow of the ship, palm upward. This hand is no mere figurehead. It is the severed appendage of a long-dead primal spirit slain by aboleths and once known as the Wayfinder. The Wayfinder—once an entity dedicated to trails, water passages, and roads—now exists as a dim intelligence within the ship and gives it magic capabilities of flight and planar travel. The Wayfinder is largely unconscious and incapable of communication, but it sometimes shows its pleasure or distress through poltergeistlike behavior. In moments of desperation for the world, the Wayfinder can miraculously awaken to move the ship or even possess a member of the crew. Davian Marcus named his guild after the primal spirit for its sacrifice in the cause.

Hand of Fate is intended to give your players' characters a means of swiftly traveling the world and the planes, and a fun home base. It uses the rules for vehicles described in *Adventurer's Vault*. This ship should free the PCs to go where the adventure lies. When they first gain the ship in the paragon tier, they gain the fantastic ability to fly across the world while travel to other planes remains an expensive gamble. At higher level, by aiding a skilled character taking 10, the PCs can often get where they need to go. When the act of breaching the planes becomes mundane, you can spice things up by having an encounter occur while the PCs are making the skill checks. Since failures don't add up to force an end to the event, any PC can attempt the check without fear if the most skilled PC is otherwise occupied. Ultimately, failure results not in doom for the PCs but in a material cost, which can easily be made up for by the rewards of the encounter. Failure might also result in an exciting, unintended side trek somewhere in the planes.

Take the concept of the Wayfinder in whatever direction you like. It could be a surprise reveal presaged by hints of the ship's sentience, or the Wayfinder might be an NPC who frequently speaks to one or more of the PCs. The Wayfinder might come in as a deus ex machina to save the faltering PCs, or *Hand of Fate* might behave like a simple magic item with an eerie means of activation.

Hand of Fate
Gargantuan vehicle
HP 400 **Space** 10 squares by 25 squares **Cost** 3,125,000 gp
AC 4; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 2
Speed 0, fly 12 (hover), overland flight 15

Pilot
The pilot must stand at a helm at the front of aftcastle.

Crew
The ship is self-aware enough that it requires no additional crew for normal operation.

Load
Forty Medium creatures; one hundred tons of cargo.

Out of Control
When out-of-control, *Hand of Fate* moves forward at half speed. Each round, it has a 50% chance of making a spiral descent. When it enters a spiral descent, it moves diagonally forward (left or right chosen at random on the first round) and down 6 squares. Each round it is out of control, *Hand of Fate* moves diagonally forward and down, shifting the diagonal 45 degrees in the chosen direction each time.

Decks
Hand of Fate has three decks: the top of the aftcastle, the main deck, and a cargo hold.

Skeletal Hand (Navigational Focus)
Someone can use the Plane Shift ritual, employing the skeletal hand on *Hand of Fate*'s bow as a navigational focus. Without the ritual, *Hand of Fate* can still take those aboard it to other planes. To breach a planar barrier, a crew member must place *residuum* worth 500 gp in the palm of the skeletal hand, which then clasps into a fist. The cost in *residuum* is only 50 gp if the ship is to cross into the Feywild at a fey crossing (*Manual of the Planes* 34) or into the Shadowfell at a shadow crossing (*Manual of the Planes* 50). The destination must be a plane in general or a place the PCs have already visited on the planes.

The process takes 10 rounds and during this time at least one crew member adjacent to the skeletal hand must use a standard action each round to make a skill check as outlined below. For each round in which no successful check is made, the ship misses its destination by 4d10 miles. If 5 or 6 rounds of the 10 have no successful check, the ship goes nowhere and the material cost is wasted. If 7 or more rounds have no successful check, Hand of Fate travels to a different plane than the one specified, often arriving at a place somehow superficially similar to the desired location. In either case, the *residuum* is wasted. If a successful shift is made to a general plane, the ship arrives at a destination on that plane determined by the DM. When the ship jumps between the planes, the skeletal hand glows, and its pointer finger points forward to pierce the planar boundaries. If the attempt fails, the fist opens as the *residuum* disappears in an angry red flash.

Destination	Skill	DC
The world	Nature	18
Feywild	Arcana	23
Shadowfell	Religion	23
Elemental Chaos	Arcana	25
Astral Sea	Religion	25

The Wailing Tome

Covered in the skin of several faces stitched together, the *Wailing Tome* moans each time it is opened. This low keening becomes a cacophonous wailing whenever the book's magic is used. The *Wailing Tome* is an opportunity for you to insert whatever creepy Far Realm rituals or magical effects you like. Like any book in a roleplaying game, it presents the challenge to the DM in that it should contain a vast amount of reading. Yet the book being in Deep Speech might put off comprehension for a while, and the maddening nature of the Far Realm gives you an excuse to limit how much the PCs can understand at any given time.

If the PCs don't destroy the book, the *Wailing Tome* should have some effect in the PCs hands—at least eventually. *Arcane Power* (to be released April 2009) presents the concept of magic tomes in detail, and using the rules presented there, the tome might work as described below. However, you don't need to stop there. The *Wailing Tome* does disturbing things, such as emit mysterious whispers only one character can hear, and the rituals it offers should be dangerous choices of last resort. Perhaps they are cheaper and faster but have unpredictable Far Realm effects, such as summoning aberrant creatures.

If a PC does use the *Wailing Tome*, you can start the item off at a level you feel is appropriate. You can then give it item levels as part of the treasure the PCs earn. Its value as treasure is the difference in cost between the lower level and higher one. Perhaps the mysterious tome even reveals more secrets as its user gains power. The book's secrets should come at a price.

Wailing Tome **Level 5+**
The hideous faces whose skin forms the binding for this book wail like tortured souls each time it is used.

Lvl 5	+1	1,000 gp	Lvl 20	+4	125,000 gp
Lvl 10	+2	5,000 gp	Lvl 25	+5	625,000 gp
Lvl 15	+3	25,000 gp	Lvl 30	+6	3,125,000 gp

Implement (Tome)
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +1d6 damage per plus
Property: When you use a wizard psychic or teleportation power, you gain a number of temporary hit points equal to the tome's enhancement bonus. When this occurs, you can instead elect to be dazed until the end of your next turn. If you do so, you gain a number of temporary hit points equal to twice the sum of the tome's enhancement bonus and your choice of your Charisma, Intelligence, or Wisdom modifier.
Property: This tome contains two wizard daily psychic or teleportation powers. Both powers must be of a level equal to or lower than that of the tome. Choose these powers when you acquire the tome; they cannot be changed later. You can add these powers to your spellbook.
Power (Daily ✦ Arcane, Implement, Psychic or Teleportation): Free Action. Choose a power contained in this tome and expend an unused wizard daily attack or utility power of an equal or higher level. You gain the use of the chosen power during this encounter. The power is lost if you do not use it before the end of the encounter.

NEW POWERS

The Celestian Order's branches, disconnected as they are in this dark age, have secret centers of knowledge hidden all over the world. In these places members of the organization strive to learn new techniques for communing with the primal energy of the world and for fighting the forces of the Far Realm. The powers below represent examples of these explorations, and they give PCs created using the *Player's Handbook* a way to take on some of the flavor of the campaign arc presented above. Although framed as the knowledge of the Celestian Order, the powers make good choices for characters regardless of whether the DM runs the Against the Far Realm campaign arc.

New Cleric Prayers

Tree of Creation — Cleric Attack 15

Motes of light burst from you, outlining a starry tree like some used to model the cosmos. The image fades, but the light of the cosmic tree lingers, harming your enemies and steeling the minds of your allies.

Daily ✦ Divine, Implement, Radiant, Zone
Standard Action **Close** burst 3
Target: Each enemy in burst
Attack: Wisdom vs. Will
Hit: 3d10 + Wisdom modifier radiant damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until then end of your next turn. You and each ally within the zone gains a +2 power bonus to Will and resist 5 psychic. If an ally within the zone is under a dazed, dominated, or stunned condition that a save can end, the ally can make a saving throw against each of those conditions at the start of his or her turn, as well as at the end of his or her turn.
Sustain Minor: The zone persists, and each enemy in it takes 1d6 radiant damage. You must remain within the zone to sustain it, but you can move its center to your location when you sustain it.

Soulshock Field — Cleric Attack 25

A flash of bright light leaves the area rippling with tiny arcs of golden lightning that leap and crawl about.

Daily ✦ Divine, Healing, Implement, Lightning, Zone
Standard Action **Area** burst 2 within 10 squares
Effect: The burst creates a zone of sparking electricity until the end of your next turn. Enemies that enter the zone or start their turns there take 2d10 + Wisdom modifier lightning damage. If an enemy is reduced to 0 hit points while within the zone, you or an ally of your choice can spend a healing surge without taking an action to do so. When you or an ally takes lightning or thunder damage while within the zone, whoever took the damage can use an immediate interrupt to spend a healing surge.
Sustain Minor: The zone persists.

New Fighter Exploits

Bloodspike Sweep — Fighter Attack 9

You whip your weapon around in an arc as deadly as the sweep of a bloodspike behemoth's tail.

Daily ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Close** burst 1
Target: Each creature in the burst you can see
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends)
Miss: Half damage.
Weapon: If you're wielding a flail, hammer, or mace, targets you hit are also knocked prone.

Salamander Lash — Fighter Attack 13

You use your weapon to expertly drive your foe into position for your attack.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Effect: You slide the target 1 square into a square adjacent to you, and then make an attack against the target. You cannot slide the target into hindering terrain.
Weapon: If you're wielding an axe, pick, or polearm, you can slide the target a number of squares equal to your Constitution modifier into a square adjacent to you.
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Strength modifier damage.
Special: When you make a Combat Challenge attack, you can use this power instead a melee basic attack.

New Paladin Prayers

Vengeful Vigilance — Paladin Utility 10

Your awareness expands to allow you to protect your allies in an instant, punishing those who would weaken your allies' resolve.

Daily ✦ Divine, Stance
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Until the stance ends, any time an enemy within 5 squares of you makes an attack that does not include you, you can use *divine challenge on* that enemy as a free action. If the triggering attack is against Will and you mark the attacker, it immediately takes the damage your *divine challenge* mark normally deals.

Wayfinder's Charge — Paladin Attack 15

Nothing can stand between your divine wrath and your foe.

Daily ✦ Divine, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must charge an enemy and use this power in place of a melee basic attack. You can charge a target marked by you even if other creatures occupy spaces that would block your charge movement. You slide such creatures 1 square before you charge. If you cannot force creatures out of the path of your charge, you cannot use this power on the marked target. Creatures that take opportunity attacks against you for your charge movement take 1[W] damage and slide 1 square.
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Strength modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.

New Ranger Exploits

Dire Bear Maul — Ranger Attack 9

You draw your foe into a deadly bear hug with both weapons.

Daily ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding two melee weapons.
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC (main) and Strength vs. AC (off-hand)
Hit: 1[W] + Strength modifier damage per attack. If both attacks hit, the target is grabbed. When you sustain the grab, the target takes 1[W] + Strength modifier damage from each weapon. You cannot otherwise attack with your weapons while you sustain the grab. If the target is your quarry, it takes a –2 penalty to escape attempts.
Miss: Half damage.

Wolfjaw Blows — Ranger Utility 16

Unwary foes fall as you take advantage of their distraction to hook your weapons into their flesh.

Daily ✦ Martial, Stance
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Until the stance ends, when you make a melee attack against a target that grants combat advantage to you, the target is knocked prone if you hit.

New Rogue Exploits

Slice Free — Rogue Attack 7

You pain your grasping enemy, allowing yourself an opening to tumble away.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Prerequisite: You must be trained in Acrobatics.
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage. If you're grabbed, you escape. You can shift half your speed.

Sneaky Roll — Rogue Utility 10

You take advantage of your foe's success to somersault into a better position.

Encounter ✦ Martial
Immediate Reaction
Prerequisite: You must be trained in Acrobatics.
Trigger: You are hit by a melee attack.
Effect: You can shift half your speed, including through squares occupied by enemies.

New Warlock Spells

Ooze Incarnate — Warlock Attack 9

Your body and items turn to caustic jelly as you slide through a throng of foes.

Daily ✦ Acid, Arcane, Implement, Polymorph
Standard Action **Personal**
Effect: You shift your speed, including through squares occupied by enemies. Until the end of your next turn, you can squeeze without penalties to your attack rolls or speed.
Targets: Creatures whose spaces you shift through
Attack: Constitution vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d8 + Constitution modifier acid damage, and you push the target 1 square.
Miss: You push the target 1 square.

Dread Briars — Warlock Attack 19

Oily black vines bristling with thorns erupt around your foe and swiftly shroud it in life-draining tangles.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Implement, Necrotic
Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Targets: One creature
Attack: Charisma vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d10 + Charisma modifier necrotic damage, and ongoing 10 necrotic damage and the target is immobilized (save ends both).
Miss: Half damage, and the target is slowed until the end of your next turn.
Fey Pact: This attack ignores necrotic resistance.

New Warlord Exploits

Wild Runner Strike — Warlord Attack 7

You lash out at your foe, and you exhort your friends to see the advantages in the terrain.

Encounter ✦ Martial, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Target: One creature
Attack: Strength vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Strength modifier damage, and the target treats all squares as difficult terrain until the end of your next turn. You and your allies ignore difficult terrain until the end of your next turn.
Resourceful Presence: Until the end of your next turn, your allies can ignore difficult terrain even if you miss.

Harrying Warhound — Warlord Utility 22

Foes within your reach dare not ignore you, prompting them to drop their guard and allowing you to aim your strikes.

Daily ✦ Martial, Stance
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Until the stance ends, enemies within your reach grant combat advantage to your allies. You gain a +1 power bonus to melee attack rolls per ally adjacent to a target of your melee attacks, to a maximum of +4.

New Wizard Spells

Thunder Cage — Wizard Attack 7

Your foe is rocked by thunderous noise, and an ominous rumble begins at your enemy's slightest move.

Encounter ✦ Arcane, Implement, Thunder
Standard Action **Ranged** 10
Target: One creature
Attack: Intelligence vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d10 + Intelligence modifier thunder damage. If the target leaves the space it currently occupies before the start of your next turn, it takes an extra 1d10 + Intelligence modifier thunder damage.

Spatial Lock — Wizard Utility 16

A silver light flashes and an unseen pulse ripples through the air. Your foes aren't going anywhere.

Daily ✦ Arcane, Zone
Standard Action **Area** burst 3 within 20 squares
Effect: The burst creates a zone that lasts until the end of your next turn. Enemies within the zone cannot teleport, use teleportation powers, or benefit from phasing. Further, within the zone, magic portals fail to function and creatures cannot access other planes or extradimensional spaces.
Sustain Minor: The zone persists.

About the Author

Matthew Sernett has been a designer of 4th Edition, the editor-in-chief of Dragon® Magazine, a pizza cook, an onion packer, and an assembly line worker in a spring factory. In 1999, while working for *Men's Health Magazine*, he narrowly avoided being a wardrobe tracker in the male fashion industry.

Game Transparency

by Andy Collins
Illustration by Concept Art House

Player 1: *Man, that's the second time this month that half the party has died in an encounter! Your game's too tough.*

Dungeon Master: *Hey, it's not my fault you all died. If you'd just used your fire attacks on the enemy fighter instead of the evil mage, you wouldn't have wasted them on his fire resistance.*

Player 2: *What do you mean, fire resistance? You never told us the mage wasn't taking full damage from my scorching bursts!*

Dungeon Master: *And you just ignored the demon while it regenerated back to full hit points.*

Player 3: *Regeneration? I just figured it must have been elite.*

Dungeon Master: *And I can't believe you didn't figure out about the attack penalty you were suffering because you were inside the mummy's aura of despair. I just mentally subtracted it from the attack results you rolled so you wouldn't have to remember it.*

Player 4: *Is that why my fighter kept missing? I would've been better off fighting the demon instead!*

If you've ever had a conversation like this with your players, this article is for you. (And if you've ever been on the player side of that discussion, you might want to point your DM over here.)

The *Dungeon Master's Guide* spends a couple of pages describing ways to dispense information to the players, from clues crucial to advancing the story to in-game effects. This article focuses on the latter category: factual information about what's happening on the tabletop from a gameplay perspective.

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In other words, allow everyone at the table know the rules and exceptions governing the current situation.

Dungeons & Dragons® is unlike most other games in that the players rarely have perfectly accurate information as to the potential ramifications of their decisions. In other words, in the vast majority of games, you know what could possibly happen when you do something.

- In a chess game, observation of the board tells you every possible move that could react from you moving your rook from one space to another. The other player has no hidden information and no surprise options. He can't add a piece to the board, change his knight into a bishop, or declare that he's moving one of your pieces instead.
- In a game of hearts, you know that when you lead a club, each other player is required to play another card of the same suit unless they don't have any (in which case each can play any card he or she wants). You also know that the highest club played will win the trick. Other players can't choose to play a different suit if they have a club, they can't announce that their 5 beats your 10, and they can't play an ace of clubs if the ace of clubs has already been played.
- In a poker game, although you might not know what cards your opponent holds, you know the range of hands he or she *could* hold. Even though your opponent has hidden information, that information falls within a limited range of options. When you show your four jacks, your opponent can't reveal a hand with nine aces, he or she can't announce that five different red-colored cards beats your hand, and he or she can't arbitrarily decide to draw three more cards just because it's a Tuesday.

These are all examples of *game transparency* (sometimes called "mechanical transparency"). Each action has a limited and quantifiable list of possible reactions, and you have a very accurate sense of what those possibilities are at any time. In other words, the games are highly transparent.

D&D®, on the other hand, is rarely so transparent, meaning that you often have no idea what the possible reactions might be. What happens if you move up to that monster? Maybe it can shift away as a reaction, potentially robbing you of your attack. Maybe it can take a free swing at you. Maybe it can teleport away, leaving an angry fire-breathing dragon in its place. Without reading the adventure ahead of time (or reading the DM's mind), you just can't be certain. That's where the DM comes in. Although it's true that part of the fun of D&D is not knowing exactly what's going to happen next, too much of that reduces the value of decision-making by the players. After all, why bother strategizing for a battle if the results of your actions appear random?

Players without sufficient transparency quickly grow bored or conclude that they have no reason to pick one tactic over another. Artful combinations of monster powers and weaknesses are ignored. Combats turn into mindless, identical grinds of "attack roll, damage roll, who's next?"

Thus, you need to inject some level of transparency, even beyond what the rules already provide. Sure, players know that flanking provides combat advantage. But do they know that those flanking goblins also deal extra damage, or do they just assume that you got a lucky damage roll? For the player to make an informed decision, it's best to let them know what's happening.

Transparency or Opacity?

Even for DMs who understand the value of game transparency, it's easy to struggle with the right balance of information-sharing and secrecy. When is the right time to tell the players what's happening?

A little opacity can maintain the illusion of believability; after all, it's not like the characters are omniscient entities with perfect information about everything around them. What's more, it keeps the game playable. Too much information can overwhelm players. Most players don't need (or want) to know the precise hit point totals, attack modifiers, defense values, and ability check modifiers of every monster on the table. Not only is there no good reason for their characters to have such detailed information, it's too hard for a player to keep track of it all in his or her head.

So how's a DM supposed to figure out when to spill the beans?

My personal rule is, "People like having fun. Do whatever makes the game more fun for the most people at the table."

In other words: Fun = Good; if Transparency = Fun, then Transparency = Good.

For most players, keeping a dozen numbers in their head isn't fun, so I wouldn't divulge detailed monster stats. But if I happened to have a table full of stat junkies—or if the party was facing off against a single monster—then I might well share some stats as the combat progressed. Letting the players keep track of the enemy dragon's ever-shrinking hit point total adds significantly to the dramatic tension at the table, which makes the game more fun . . . at least for me and my players.

Tailoring Transparency to Your Gaming Group

As described in Chapter 1 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, different people get enjoyment from different aspects of the game. Another way of saying this is that not all players appreciate the same style of play. One player's welcome transparency might be another player's rude jolt of mechanics over story.

Using the primary player motivations listed on pages 8–10 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* as a guide, it's pretty easy to divide most players into two basic camps regarding how to achieve game transparency.

The Blunt Approach: A forthright explanation of exactly what's happening, in actual game terms, is especially welcomed by **thinkers**, who want as much information as possible to make their choices. The **power gamer** (and his cousin, the **slayer**) also appreciates knowing exactly what's going on at the table. These players are likely to interrupt your artful description of the sights and sounds for confirmation on what's "actually happening." The **instigator** is likely to ask a lot of "what happens if I do this" questions, so making some of those answers plainly obvious can save you time.

These players don't want to know that the enemy hobgoblin "seems poised to react," they want to know that he's "readying an attack against you if you move up to him." They want to know how the enemy could attack a second time on his turn ("because he spent his action point"), the exact size of the efreet cinderlord's *blazing soul* aura, and what action triggered the orc chieftain's *inspire ferocity* power.

This approach also often works best for players still learning the game. Extreme transparency makes a game system feel more predictable, which helps the new player learn why things work the way they do. If the game feels like a black box, where the new player's actions produce apparently random results, he might have fun, but this novelty can wear off quickly. (Just make sure you don't overwhelm new players with too much information.)

Unfortunately, this method lacks flair and style, and it can easily break players out of the illusion of the fantasy world that you've created at the table. If your players prefer description and story narrative over hard mechanics, this approach can jar them.

The Subtle Approach: This method of achieving transparency uses sensory cues and in-world explanations (rather than rule-speak) to communicate what's going on. By describing what the scene looks like to the character, you give the player clues as to what's going on in game terms.

Actors and **storytellers** tend to favor this approach, since it allows the story of the game to obscure the rules (which are less important to such players). **Explorers** like learning cause and effect, but they'd rather learn the in-world "why" of something than the rule behind it. ("Did you know that it was Gruumsh who taught the first orc chieftain to inspire his dying allies to take one last swing at their hated foes?")

Many **watchers** are more likely to be drawn in by flavorful descriptions than by rule recitations, and the uncertainty created by the subtle approach can appeal to some **instigators** (because if they always know exactly what's going to happen when they do something, it can take the fun out of it).

This method immerses the players in the fictional reality of the game world. After all, from the characters' point of views, there's no such thing as a dice roll or a special threshold of health that suddenly changes how the world works.

However, this method can be too vague and confusing for some players, particularly those still learning how the game works. They don't yet know how to decode your clues, so they can't figure out how to apply that information to their characters' actions.

The Balanced Approach: Ultimately, most DMs come down somewhere in the middle, combining game rules with flavorful sensory information. After all, it's unlikely that your entire group falls into one subset of player attitudes. The thinker playing the tactical warlord to your left needs details, but the actor sitting on your right wants the freedom to interpret the situation through her ranger's eyes.

If your combats and skill challenges have turned into rote exchanges of die rolls that lack any connection to the world within the game—or worse yet, into puzzles that the players spend an hour solving before rolling a single die—try obscuring some of the rules behind a cloud of sensory cues to re-invest the players in the story you're telling together.

On the other hand, if you get a lot of "how was I supposed to know he could do that again?" questions from your players, you might need to be a little less subtle, substituting actual rules-based descriptions for some of your flavorful clues.

What's That Monster?

Perhaps the most basic question asked by a player, this innocuous query is the first step in understanding how the transparency issue applies to game play. With the vast array of enemies available to the DM, it can be understandably hard for players to keep track of them all. But knowing that you're facing a carnage demon or a rimefire griffon is more compelling than facing a "short, squat creature with crimson skin and enormous claws" or a "white-skinned winged quadruped with a glowing blue horn."

What's more, knowing a monster's name is the first step for many players in determining how best to fight the creature. In some cases, a name triggers broadly held common knowledge of a monster. A "big, green humanoid creature" could be a hezrou demon, a curse slaad, or a yuan-ti, but as soon as you tell the players they're up against a troll, they'll break out the alchemist's fire. (See "How Do We Kill It?," below, for more on this topic.)

In addition to making the game more fun for the players, it's a lot easier to refer to monsters by name at the table, rather than repeating its physical description over and over. It's particularly helpful when the mini you're using doesn't quite match the monster they're facing (and no matter how big your minis collection gets, you'll always run into this problem from time to time), because it helps the players avoid misidentifying the monster.

Use the DCs provided on page 180 of the *Player's Handbook* to allow players to identify the monsters their characters face. To speed play, consider using passive check results: Write down the highest passive

check result for the Arcana, Dungeoneering, Nature, and Religion skills among your PCs, and consult those at the start of each encounter, passing out the monster names as initiative is rolled.

Transparency at the Table

Here are a few other areas where transparency is particularly rewarding to players, and some tips on how to handle them in your game.

Bloodied

As the *Dungeon Master's Guide* points out, bloodied is the most important combat state to communicate to players. Not only does it help guide tactics, but it also lets you avoid giving out precise hit point totals. Tell the players as soon as the monster becomes bloodied, and if that state changes, let them know.

This goes both ways: each player should announce when his or her character becomes bloodied or no longer bloodied. Assume that all monsters can recognize this condition and act accordingly.

This is a rare situation where the blunt approach is strictly better than the subtle. Trying to get across that a monster has reached the bloodied state by describing its physical appearance is not only cumbersome—you'll quickly run out of new ways to say "it's getting pretty badly beaten up"—but it also doesn't mesh well with the players' need for exactly that information. Many powers function best (or only function) on bloodied foes, and forcing the players into a guessing game isn't likely to increase their fun.

If possible, use a visible marker to indicate bloodied monsters and PCs on the tabletop. This heads off the endless stream of "which ones are bloodied" questions. Even if you don't use miniatures, a big red token (such as a drink coaster with BLOODIED printed on it) sitting on a character sheet is a useful reminder of which characters are in trouble.

If a monster has a particularly large number of hit points (such as a solo monster), I sometimes provide a little more information as combat goes along. After all, it can take a long time for that runescribed dracolich to go from 667 hit points ("bloodied") to 0 hit points. Announcing when it hits 25% hit points, or maybe when it's down to less than 100 hit points, helps the players make decisions about combat.

Minions

Announcing to the players when you put a handful of miniatures down on the table that "these orcs are minions" immediately changes the players' tactics. (If you've ever watched a player's frustrated realization that he just wasted his best power to kill a single minion, you already know what I'm talking about.) Fighters have fun using *cleave* against minions, and wizards and other controllers love blasting minions to smithereens with their bursts and blasts. A warlock might curse a minion just so his pact boon is triggered quickly, but a ranger is unlikely to spend a minor action to make a minion his quarry.

The Blunt Approach: Consider putting a temporary mark on miniatures that represent minions. A tiny colored sticker or a dot of paint on the base works well, particularly on plastic minis. (Your own hand-painted miniatures might not agree with such marks, so be careful.) Once your players learn that "green dot means minion," they can assess the battlefield that much more quickly.

The Subtle Approach: Use common or otherwise less-imposing miniatures for minions. Describe them as looking weaker or less dangerous than the other monsters at the table. This lets the players immerse themselves in their characters' perceptions; after all, orc drudges don't wear "Minion" name tags. Be ready for the occasional outburst of aggravation at a wasted power (and consider trying a house rule that allows a player to regain a daily power used against minions if he or she could have used an at-will powers for the same outcome).

How the Pros Do It

I like to give out information based on "expected" PC knowledge in a way that increases player immersion in the game. For example, it's reasonable to believe that the fighter can easily tell that goblin cutters (minions) aren't trained and hardened warriors simply by the way these goblins carry their weapons. The elf's familiarity with the natural world might let her identify which of the kruthiks are hatchlings (minions) and which aren't.

—Chris Sims, D&D Insider™ Producer

Recharge Powers

Making a monster's recharge powers more apparent to the players gives them the option of using that knowledge to help plan their actions. Except in particularly iconic cases (such as a dragon's *breath weapon*), players rarely know if a monster's power has a recharge option until it gets used a second (or third) time in the battle. Even then, they might assume it's an at-will power that the monster has opted not to use every round. This means that players don't plan tactics around those powers (or, alternatively, that they plan tactics based on incorrect information, which can lead to frustration).

The Blunt Approach: Tell the players at the start of the monster's turn which power (if any) it's trying to recharge, and if it's successful. "At the start of the bugbear strangler's turn, he rolls to recharge his *body shield* power and . . . [clatter of dice] . . . succeeds. He's now ready to use his grabbed prisoner to block an incoming attack."

If the recharge doesn't involve a roll, tell them when the recharge circumstance occurs: "When you bloody the dragon, his *breath weapon* recharges, and then he uses it again."

Obviously, this approach is extremely clinical, driving home with crystal clarity that you're playing a numbers game that's controlled by rules and dice (rather than inhabiting a world with its own laws of cause and effect). This level of insight into the rules can easily turn off some players.

The Subtle Approach: Describe to the players what their characters see and hear when a recharge occurs. That bugbear strangler who just recharged his *body shield* power might "regain his balance and pull the grabbed character in close, readying himself to duck behind his prisoner." Characters battling a dragon might hear, "As you strike the dragon, it takes a deep breath and suddenly lets loose another blast of fire with a mighty roar!"

Of course, this method risks the players missing the significance of what you're telling them. If players aren't getting the hint, it's possible that they can't tell the difference between your recharge clue and your other descriptions of what's going on in combat. Try using a more serious or concerned tone, suggesting that something bad is about to happen, to get across the importance of this clue (as opposed to the other clues you give during combat scenes).

How the Pros Do It

I get the players in on the act of recharging by telling them to roll the d6. They don't know the target number, but they know that high is bad. This keeps them engaged with the monsters. Note that I stole this idea from [D&D Creative Manager] Chris Perkins.

—Peter Schaefer, D&D Developer

The Balanced Approach: With this approach, you communicate the when and why of a recharge by using a combination of game terms and flavorful cues.

"After a couple rounds of struggling with his captive[1], the bugbear strangler finally gets him back into position to block the next incoming attack.[2]"

[1] This suggests the roll required for the recharge, indicating that the strangler doesn't have complete control over how often he uses the *body shield* power.

[2] This clearly signals what option is now available to the bugbear, signaling to the players what will happen if they attack the strangler.

"As you bloody the dragon[1], it staggers back slightly. Suddenly[2], you feel a rush of power surging through the dragon right before it opens its jaws and releases a blast of fire!"

[1] This clearly describes the trigger: rendering the dragon bloodied. Without that trigger, the PCs might simply ascribe the sudden breath weapon to hitting the dragon, or even hitting it with a certain kind of attack.

[2] This indicates the instantaneous "free action" nature of the *bloodied breath* power.

How Do We Kill It?

Learning a monster's name is just the tip of the iceberg: What the players really want are clues as to how to fight it. From its powers and weaknesses to its level and role, any tidbit that suggests a battle tactic is a nugget of gold. This is particularly true for the thinkers and power gamers in your group, but your explorers and storytellers want to know about the monster as well, though their questions might differ.

Thankfully, the game already includes guidelines on how much information to dispense. The *Player's Handbook* provides DCs for the knowledge checks required to learn key facts about a monster. For your story-based players, the *Monster Manual* provides Lore entries for most creatures, detailing their place in the world. Together, these two sources of information cover most of the monster-related questions likely to come up in your game, and they give you a starting point for adjudicating more unusual queries.

As with monster identification, you can use active or passive checks to dispense such information. Avoid inundating your players with more information than they can handle; if you dump 5 minutes of keywords, powers, and vulnerabilities on the group at the start of every fight, your players are likely to forget much of what you tell them. Of course, the simple fact that you gave them information is a good start, and when they start asking questions halfway through the battle you'll have the information at hand to repeat.

If you run into too much frustration with short player memories, scale back the info provided at the start of combat, parsing out additional details only when they become relevant. If the wizard starts to launch a *scorching burst* at the hell hounds, that's a good time to remind her that her passive Arcana skill check result is high enough to remember that they're resistant to fire.

But what about observations during the battle? Surely an Arcana check shouldn't be required to recognize that those hell hounds weren't damaged by the wizard's *scorching burst*?

How the Pros Do It

I have had times where check results were so terrible that I withheld some information, but I then allow the information to come out via NPC interactions or other avenues. Poor rolls just make getting the information a little harder . . . or more interesting.

—Chris Sims, D&D Insider Producer

The Blunt Approach: Whenever the characters observe, experience, or interact with one of the monster's powers or other features, tell them what's going on in game terms. When the hell hound gets hit by *scorching burst*, tell the players that it has fire resistance. You can even tell them the exact value if you want. When a character moves adjacent to the hell hound, tell that player that you're rolling 1d6 for the fire damage dealt by its *fire shield* aura.

Perhaps the most controversial bit of game transparency for many groups is the monster's array of defense scores. Many DMs loathe revealing a monster's AC or Reflex, confirming only whether any given attack is successful or not. This is a perfectly acceptable level of transparency; after all, the players eventually learn at least the approximate range of the defense scores by trial and error.

However, many DMs are perfectly comfortable sharing the monster's exact defense scores with the players. Some share this information for "free," and others require an appropriate knowledge check (I recommend using the DC for its resistances and vulnerabilities). Either way, the result is that players have more information to make good decisions in battle, which can lead to happy players.

For example, knowing that Will is the death titan's worst defense score encourages players to use powers that target that defense, rather than potentially wasting a different power against its much higher Fortitude.

The Subtle Approach: Simply describe the apparent results of the characters' actions, allowing them to draw their own conclusions.

"Even though the hell hound makes no effort to dodge your *scorching burst*, the flames of your spell wash over it to no effect."

"The death titan effortlessly escapes the grasp of your *thorns of venom*."

"Your *curse of the fey king* spell easily pierces the death titan's feeble mental defenses."

As with any of the subtle approaches, consistency is crucial. If your players can't tell the difference between your descriptions of a missed attack and of a successful attack ignored due to resistance or immunity, they might continue a fruitless plan or give up just because of an unlucky die roll.

The Balanced Approach: This method can best be described as "flavor, with parenthetical rules explanations." Following up the visible effect of the *scorching burst* against the hell hound with a brief aside that it must be resistant to fire helps ensure that all your players are on the same page. When you tell the player that her missed attack was "the result of a desperate dodge by the enemy—you'll need to roll just a little bit better," she understands instantly what she needs for success.

How the Pros Do It

Absent the monster knowledge checks, I'll usually indicate that the PCs are taking the hard way if they've spent a round or two hammering on the best defense. For example, when fighting soldier monsters, I'll say something like "his AC seems pretty high."

I'll also help the PCs home in on a defense by commenting when a PC misses by 1 or 2. Sometimes this comes across as mocking, but sometimes it *is* mocking.

—Stephen Schubert, D&D Developer

Conclusion

Some DMs worry about players learning too much about the obstacles they face. I can't count how many times I've heard some variation on this: "When the players know all the monsters, it takes the mystery out of the game." Although that statement holds some truth, the fact is that most players can't or don't want to memorize every monster statistic. What they do want is to know—or know how to learn—enough about the monsters they face to make smart decisions in battle.

What's more, sharing information with the players can remove a lot of memory burden from the DM, freeing him or her up to focus on making the game more interesting. Imagine a game where one of your players was in charge of tracking whether each PC's attack hit or missed, as well as each monster's current hit points (perhaps on a big white board visible to everyone at the table). To most DMs, this situation would feel totally foreign. Yet, by spreading some of the number-tracking burden to a player, you've given yourself more time to more carefully consider monster actions, to provide more compelling descriptions of what's happening in the game, and to pay closer attention to what's going on around the table.

The players are not your enemies. D&D isn't just about players cooperating with one another to defeat the DM's monsters, it's about the players and DM cooperating to create a fun, exciting experience for everyone at the table.

If you honestly feel that you have an antagonistic relationship with your players or your DM, consider sitting down to talk about the situation. Chances are, nobody's having as much fun as they want to have, and a more cooperative, transparent game experience will keep people happier.

About the Author

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Playtest: Monk

by Rob Heinsoo, Mike Mearls and Robert J. Schwab
illustrations by Amanda Sartor

"You fight well, but without discipline and focus, you will fail."

From high in forbidding mountains to the alleys of a city's meanest district, the ascetic warriors known as monks practice their art. By focusing on their minds and bodies, honing both to near perfection, they master a psionic fighting art that allows them to deliver a punch with the force of a giant's club and to absorb attacks as well as a heavily armored knight. Monks tap into the psionic potential that rests within their bodies and minds, turning that energy further inward to fortify their bodies and sharpen their minds.

Perhaps you set out on this path to put a dark past behind you, or maybe your village was victimized one time too many by an evil lord or marauding beasts and you now seek justice. No matter what your motivation, the path of the monk transforms you into a living weapon.

CLASS TRAITS

Role: Striker. You typically eschew weapons in favor of unarmed attacks, and you avoid armor in favor of maneuverability and agility. No one can match your speed and poise on the battlefield. Your powers are more than simple attacks; they are complex forms that allow you to strike and move with unmatched grace. Depending on your choice of class features and powers, you might lean toward controller as a secondary role.
Power Source: Psionic. Your intense focus, constant training, and exceptional talent combine to allow you to harness the psionic power within yourself.
Key Abilities: Dexterity, Strength, Wisdom

Armor Proficiencies: Cloth
Weapon Proficiencies: Club, dagger, quarterstaff, shuriken, sling, spear
Implements: Monk weapons
Bonus to Defense: +1 Fortitude, +1 Reflex, +1 Will

Hit Points at 1st Level: 12 + Constitution score
Hit Points per Level Gained: 5
Healing Surges per Day: 7 + Constitution modifier

Trained Skills: From the class skills list below, choose four trained skills at 1st level.

Class Skills: Acrobatics (Dex), Athletics (Str), Diplomacy (Cha), Endurance (Con), Heal (Wis), Insight (Wis), Perception (Wis), Stealth (Dex), Thievery (Dex)

Class Features: Monastic Tradition, Unarmed Combatant, Unarmored Defense

The road opens wide before you. With little more than a walking stick and perhaps a satchel of food, you are ready to take on whatever the world can throw at you. Your many years of training taught you to turn your eye inward. Now it is time to look outward and test yourself against the world and its dangers.

MONK OVERVIEW

Characteristics: You use powers that combine movement with powerful strikes, allowing you to dart in and out of battle without risking attack from your foes. Compared to other strikers, you are better at taking on small groups of enemies. You hit, move, and fade away before your enemies can respond.

Religion: Some monks forgo devotion to the gods, preferring to find strength in rigorous adherence to their ascetic principles and the training needed to unlock their psionic powers. However, some monasteries are specifically dedicated to the gods. Bahamut attracts monks who serve as champions of good. Other monks revere Kord, seeing in his martial prowess an example they can aspire to. Many contemplative monks devote themselves to Ioun, seeking to hone their minds and bring their entire beings into balance.

Races: Humans are the most common monks and master more fighting styles than other monks do. Elves are talented monks, for their awareness and agility are both useful tools in studying monastic disciplines. Half-orcs take surprisingly well to this class, though few of them have the discipline needed to become monks.

Monk Class Features

Monks have the following class features.

Monastic Tradition

Monks train in a number of traditional techniques, with each monastery focusing on a specific style. Each monk chooses a Monastic Tradition, which provides a Flurry of Blows power and a defensive benefit.

Your training and use of psionic magic allow you to strike with incredible speed, represented by the Flurry of Blows class feature. Each Monastic Tradition teaches a different version of Flurry of Blows. Your tradition also helps you focus your body or mind to become more resilient to attacks.

This playtest presents the Centered Breath tradition.

Centered Breath

The Centered Breath tradition focuses on honing your mental awareness to better harness psionic magic. This tradition teaches that only by controlling yourself can you control your environment. The tradition's adherents are typically ascetics, whose monasteries stand in quiet corners of the world, where the monks can train and study without distraction. In some of these monasteries, speech is forbidden except for one hour each day.

Flurry of Blows: You gain the *centered flurry of blows* power (see page 68).

Mental Equilibrium: You gain a +1 bonus to Fortitude. This bonus increases to +2 at 11th level and +3 at 21st level.

Unarmed Combatant

You can make unarmed attacks with much greater effectiveness than most combatants. When you make an unarmed attack, you can use the monk unarmed strike, which is a weapon in the unarmed weapon group. This weapon has the off-hand weapon property, a reach of 1, and a +3 proficiency bonus, and the weapon damage die is 1d8. You must have a hand free to use your monk unarmed strike, even if you're kicking, kneeing, elbowing, or head-butting a target.

The Enchant Magic Item ritual (*Player's Handbook*, page 304) can be used to turn your monk unarmed strike into a magic weapon. For example, through that ritual, you could have a *+1 flaming monk unarmed strike*.

Unarmored Defense

While you are wearing cloth armor or no armor and aren't using a shield, you gain a +2 bonus to AC.

Monk Weapons

Some of your powers might require you to attack with a monk weapon. The following weapons count as monk weapons: unarmed attacks, clubs, daggers, quarterstaffs, and spears.

Implements

Monks wield monk weapons as implements, channeling psionic energy through them. When you wield a magic monk weapon as an implement, you can add its enhancement bonus to the attack rolls and the damage rolls of monk powers and monk paragon path powers that have the implement keyword. Without an implement, you can still use these powers. If you score a critical hit with a magic monk weapon when

using it as an implement, you use the weapon's critical hit effect. You don't use a monk weapon's proficiency bonus when wielding the weapon as an implement.

Creating a Monk

You can choose any powers you like for your monk, though your choice of Monastic Tradition is likely to influence some of your choices. Dexterity is the most important ability for monks, since all monk attacks rely on it. Depending on your Monastic Tradition, you might favor Wisdom or Strength as your second ability score.

Full Discipline

Many monk powers have the full discipline keyword. A full discipline power gives you two or more actions to choose from, usually an attack technique and a movement technique. Attack techniques usually require a standard action, and movement techniques are options for your move actions. For a monk, a full discipline power represents a fighting style, a unique combination of a move and an attack.

You can use only one full discipline power per round. However, if you spend an action point to take an extra action, you can switch to a different full discipline power. You can use the techniques of a full discipline power in whatever order you like, and you can choose to use one of the techniques and not the other during a particular round.

The number of times you can use a full discipline power's techniques during a round is determined by the power's type—at-will or encounter—and by the actions you have available that round. For example, you can use the techniques of an at-will full discipline power as many times during a round as you like, provided you have enough of the required actions, but you can use the techniques of an encounter full discipline power once during a round.

Centered Breath Monk

You search for the flow of energy within yourself, the world, and each battle. Calmly anticipating your enemy's attacks, you move swiftly across the battlefield and excel at projecting your psionic energy outward to control your enemies and foil their plans. Dexterity should be your highest score, Wisdom should be your second, and Strength can be your third, since you will probably want to select a mix of powers that use Wisdom and Strength.

Suggested Class Feature: Centered Breath

Suggested Feat: Focused Expertise

Suggested Skills: Acrobatics, Athletics, Insight, Perception

Suggested At-Will Powers: *dancing cobra, five storms*

Suggested Encounter Power: *drunken monkey*

Suggested Daily Power: *masterful spiral*

New Feat

The Centered Breath monk uses a new feat, Focused Expertise.

Focused Expertise

Benefit: Choose a weapon that you can wield as an implement. You gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls with any implement or weapon power you use through that weapon. The bonus increases to +2 at 15th level and +3 at 25th level.

Special: You can take this feat more than once. Each time you take this feat, choose a different weapon that you can wield as an implement. This bonus is not cumulative with the one provided by Implement Expertise or Weapon Expertise.

Monk Powers

Your monk powers are called disciplines. They rely on your physical training, mental focus, and mastery of psionic magic to function.

Class Features

Monks of the Centered Breath tradition gain the Flurry of Blows power *centered flurry of blows*.

Centered Flurry of Blows — **Monk Feature**

You strike with incredible speed, your fists a blur as you follow up your initial attack with another.

At-Will • Implement, Psionic
Free Action (Special) **Melee** touch
Trigger: You hit with an attack during your turn
Target: One creature
Level 11: One or two creatures
Level 21: Each enemy adjacent to you
Effect: The target takes damage equal to your Wisdom modifier. If the target was not a target of the triggering attack, you can slide the target 1 square to a square adjacent to you.
Special: You can use this power only once per round.

Level 1 At-Will Disciplines

Dancing Cobra — Monk Attack 1

You slither like a cobra, weaving among your enemies and turning their attacks against them.

At-Will ✦ Full Discipline, Psionic, Weapon
Attack Technique
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a monk weapon.
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 1[W] + Dexterity modifier damage. The attack deals extra damage equal to your Wisdom modifier if the target made an opportunity attack against you during this turn.
Movement Technique
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You move your speed + 2.

Dragon's Tail — Monk Attack 1

Your hand lashes out like a dragon's tail, and with the lightest touch unleashes power that knocks your foe to the ground.

At-Will ✦ Full Discipline, Implement, Psionic
Attack Technique
Standard Action **Melee** touch
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d6 + Dexterity modifier damage, and you knock the target prone.
Movement Technique
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You swap places with an adjacent ally or an adjacent prone enemy.

Crane's Wings — Monk Attack 1

You leap across the battlefield and kick your foe, sending it staggering backward.

At-Will ✦ Full Discipline, Psionic, Weapon
Attack Technique
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a monk weapon.
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and you push the target 1 square.
Movement Technique
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You make an Athletics check to jump with a +5 power bonus. You are considered to have a running start, and the distance of the jump isn't limited by your speed.

Five Storms — Monk Attack 1

You move like a whirlwind, spinning as you unleash an array of kicks and punches, which slam into your foes like a storm crashing ashore.

At-Will ✦ Full Discipline, Implement, Psionic
Attack Technique
Standard Action **Close** burst 1
Target: Each creature in burst
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d6 + Dexterity modifier damage.
Movement Technique
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You shift 2 squares.

Level 1 Encounter Disciplines

Drunken Monkey — Monk Attack 1

You lurch seemingly out of control. Your enemies are bewildered as they try to hit your swaying form, and with a cunning jab, you cause your foe to attack its companion.

Encounter ✦ Full Discipline, Implement, Psionic
Attack Technique
Standard Action **Melee** touch
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Will
Hit: 1d6 + Dexterity modifier damage, and you slide the target 1 square. The target then makes a melee basic attack as a free action against an enemy of your choice. The target gains a bonus to the attack roll equal to your Wisdom modifier.
Movement Technique
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You move your speed + 2. During this movement, you ignore difficult terrain and gain a power bonus to all defenses against opportunity attacks triggered by the movement. The power bonus equals your Wisdom modifier.

Open the Gate of Battle — Monk Attack 1

Your sudden movement catches your foe unprepared, and you launch into your attack.

Encounter ✦ Full Discipline, Psionic, Weapon
Attack Technique
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a monk weapon.
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage. If the target was undamaged before the attack, the attack deals 1[W] extra damage.
Movement Technique
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You move your speed + 2. During this movement, you don't provoke opportunity attacks from the first enemy you move adjacent to.

Level 1 Daily Disciplines

Masterful Spiral — Monk Attack 1

With the merest gesture, you deliver crushing kicks and punches of psionic force to nearby enemies.

Daily ✦ Force, Implement, Psionic, Stance
Standard Action **Close** burst 2
Target: Each creature in burst
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d6 + Dexterity modifier force damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You assume the spiral stance. Until the stance ends, your reach with melee touch attacks increases by 1.

Whirling Mantis Step — Monk Attack 1

With swift steps and overwhelming leverage, you shove aside your foes and cripple them with vicious kicks to their legs and knees.

Daily ✦ Psionic, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a monk weapon.
Effect: You shift your speed. If you enter a square adjacent to an enemy during this shift, you slide that enemy 1 square. You can slide an enemy only once in this manner. After the shift, make the following attack.
Target: One, two, or three creatures
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and the target is slowed (save ends).
Miss: Half damage, and the target is slowed until the end of your next turn.

Level 2 Utility Disciplines

Leaf on the Wind — Monk Utility 2

Before your enemy can force you back, you whirl around, using its force to propel you forward.

Encounter ✦ Psionic
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: You are pulled, pushed, or slid
Effect: Instead of being affected by the forced movement, you shift the number of squares it would have moved you.

Harmonious Discipline — Monk Utility 2

Defense and offense, inhalation and exhalation—both are part of your discipline.

Encounter ✦ Psionic
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You gain temporary hit points equal to your Wisdom modifier. When you have no temporary hit points remaining, you gain a bonus to the damage rolls of your next melee attack before the end of the encounter. The bonus equals your Wisdom modifier.

Level 3 Encounter Disciplines

Dance of Swords — Monk Attack 3

As your foes swarm around you, you leap among them and turn their numbers against them.

Encounter ✦ Full Discipline, Psionic, Weapon
Attack Technique
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a monk weapon.
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage. The attack deals extra damage equal to twice the number of enemies adjacent to you.
Movement Technique
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You move your speed + 2. If any enemy makes an opportunity attack provoked by this movement and misses you, you gain combat advantage against that enemy until the end of this turn.

Twin Thunders — Monk Attack 3

You move in a blur, tumbling around a foe, and deliver a sweeping kick with such ferocity that thunderous energy blasts both that foe and its companion.

Encounter ✦ Full Discipline, Implement, Psionic, Thunder
Attack Technique
Standard Action **Melee** touch
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d10 + Dexterity modifier thunder damage, and one enemy adjacent to the target takes 1d10 thunder damage.
Movement Technique
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: Choose an adjacent enemy and move your speed + 2. During this movement, you don't provoke opportunity attacks for leaving squares adjacent to that enemy.

Level 5 Daily Disciplines

Deadly Cobra Strike — Monk Attack 5

You weave from side to side and lash your hand forth like a striking cobra, leaving behind psionically poisoned wounds.

Daily ✦ Implement, Poison, Psionic
Standard Action **Melee** touch
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d10 + Dexterity modifier damage, and ongoing 5 poison damage (save ends).
Miss: Half damage.

One Hundred Leaves — Monk Attack 5

You launch a flurry of attacks, striking with such speed and might that your foes scatter before you like leaves on a hurricane.

Daily ✦ Implement, Psionic
Standard Action **Close** blast 3
Target: Each creature in blast
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 1d10 + Dexterity modifier damage, and you push the target 2 squares.
Miss: Half damage, and you push the target 1 square.
Effect: Until the end of your next turn, you can target one additional creature with your Flurry of Blows power.

Level 6 Utility Disciplines

Centered Defense — Monk Utility 6

You breath deeply. With your center strong, you calmly avoid enemy attacks.

Daily ✦ Psionic, Stance
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Until the stance ends, you gain a +2 power bonus to all defenses.

Purifying Meditation — Monk Utility 6

You focus your mind inward, finding the source of what ills you and driving it away.

Encounter ✦ Psionic
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: You make a saving throw with a bonus equal to your Wisdom modifier.

Level 7 Encounter Disciplines

Fist of One Hundred Strikes — Monk Attack 7

You move so quickly that you become a blur, as if a hundred copies of yourself suddenly sprang among your foes.

Encounter ✦ Full Discipline, Psionic, Weapon
Attack Technique
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a monk weapon.
Target: One or two creatures
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and you shift 1 square.
Movement Technique
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You shift 2 squares.

Strike the Avalanche — Monk Attack 7

As your blow falls, you impart power to your foe that sends it flying across the battlefield to slam into your enemies like an avalanche.

Encounter ✦ Full Discipline, Implement, Psionic
Attack Technique
Standard Action **Melee** touch
Primary Target: One creature
Primary Attack: Dexterity vs. Fortitude
Hit: 1d10 + Dexterity modifier damage, and you slide the primary target a number of squares equal to your Wisdom modifier. Then make a secondary attack.
Secondary Target: Each enemy adjacent to the primary target
Secondary Attack: Dexterity vs. Fortitude
Hit: The secondary target is knocked prone.
Movement Technique
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You move your speed + 2. During this movement, you don't provoke opportunity attacks from prone enemies.

Level 9 Daily Disciplines

Strength to Weakness — Monk Attack 9

You psionically perceive what your eyes cannot see: your foe's inner weakness. You lightly touch that foe. A moment later, the agony of your attack falls upon it.

Daily ✦ Implement, Psionic
Standard Action **Melee** touch
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Fortitude or Reflex
Hit: Ongoing damage equal to 15 + your Dexterity modifier (save ends).
Miss: Ongoing 10 damage (save ends).

Twilight Touch — Monk Attack 9

You press your fingers against your enemies, disrupting the flow of energy through them and clouding their vision.

Daily ✦ Implement, Psionic, Psychic
Standard Action **Melee** touch
Target: One, two, or three creatures
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d6 + Dexterity modifier psychic damage, and the target is blinded until the end of your next turn.
Miss: Half damage.

Level 10 Utility Disciplines

Iron Dragon Defense — Monk Utility 10

You quiet your mind and shrug off the pain inflicted upon you.

Encounter ✦ Psionic
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: You take damage
Effect: The damage is reduced by 10 + your Wisdom modifier.

Spider Technique — Monk Utility 10

In your mind, you turn walls and ceilings into floors. For a moment, you walk on them as if they were indeed floors.

At-Will ✦ Psionic
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You climb a number of squares equal to your speed. During this movement, you can move across a ceiling, but you must end your turn on the ground or on a vertical surface. Otherwise, you fall.

Level 13 Encounter Disciplines

Dance of the Stinging Hornet — Monk Attack

You leap into the air and land on your foe's back. From there, you rain blows on it as it tries to dislodge you.

Encounter ✦ Full Discipline, Implement, Psionic
Attack Technique
Standard Action **Melee** touch
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d10 + Dexterity modifier damage, and you grab the target. Until the grab ends, the target grants cover to you, and if it is larger than you, you can end a move action in its space. If you do so, the target isn't immobilized by this grab, you remain in its space when it moves (you don't provoke opportunity attacks as you move with it), and its movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks from you.
Movement Technique
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You make an Athletics check to jump with a +5 power bonus. You are considered to have a running start. You can use the attack technique at any point during this movement.

Overpowering Strike — Monk Attack 13

You focus psionic energy into a single strike so powerful that your foe has trouble striking back.

Encounter ✦ Full Discipline, Psionic, Weapon
Attack Technique
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a monk weapon.
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Dexterity modifier damage. Until the end of your next turn, the target takes a penalty to attack rolls against you equal to your Wisdom modifier.
Movement Technique
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You shift 3 squares.

Level 15 Daily Disciplines

Way of the Winter Wind — Monk Attack 15

You spring into the air and perform a roundhouse kick, creating a bitter draft. You dance on the wind as it washes over your foes, draining their strength.

Daily ✦ Cold, Implement, Psionic, Stance
Standard Action **Close** burst 2
Target: Each creature in burst
Attack: Dexterity vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d6 + Dexterity modifier cold damage, and the target is weakened (save ends).
Miss: Half damage, and the target is weakened until the end of your next turn.
Effect: You assume the autumn wind stance. Until the stance ends, whenever you are hit by an attack, you can shift 2 squares as an immediate reaction.

Ring the Golden Bell — Monk Attack 15

You leap up and punch at the air, causing a shimmering bolt of force to arc across the battlefield. You land at the bolt's point of impact.

Daily ✦ Force, Implement, Psionic
Standard Action **Close** burst 1
Effect: Before the attack, you jump 10 squares. This movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.
Target: Each creature in burst
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d6 + Dexterity modifier force damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).
Miss: Half damage, and the target is dazed until the end of your next turn.

Level 16 Utility Disciplines

Diamond Mind — Monk Utility 16

Your disciplined mind repels your enemy's attack.

Encounter ✦ Psionic
Immediate Interrupt **Personal**
Trigger: An attack hits your Will
Effect: You gain a +5 bonus to Will against the triggering attack.

Meditative Solace — Monk Utility 16

By focusing your mind, you banish your ills.

Daily ✦ Psionic, Stance
Minor Action **Personal**
Effect: Until the stance ends, you can make a saving throw as a minor action once per round.

Level 17 Encounter Disciplines

Steps of Grasping Fire — Monk Attack 17

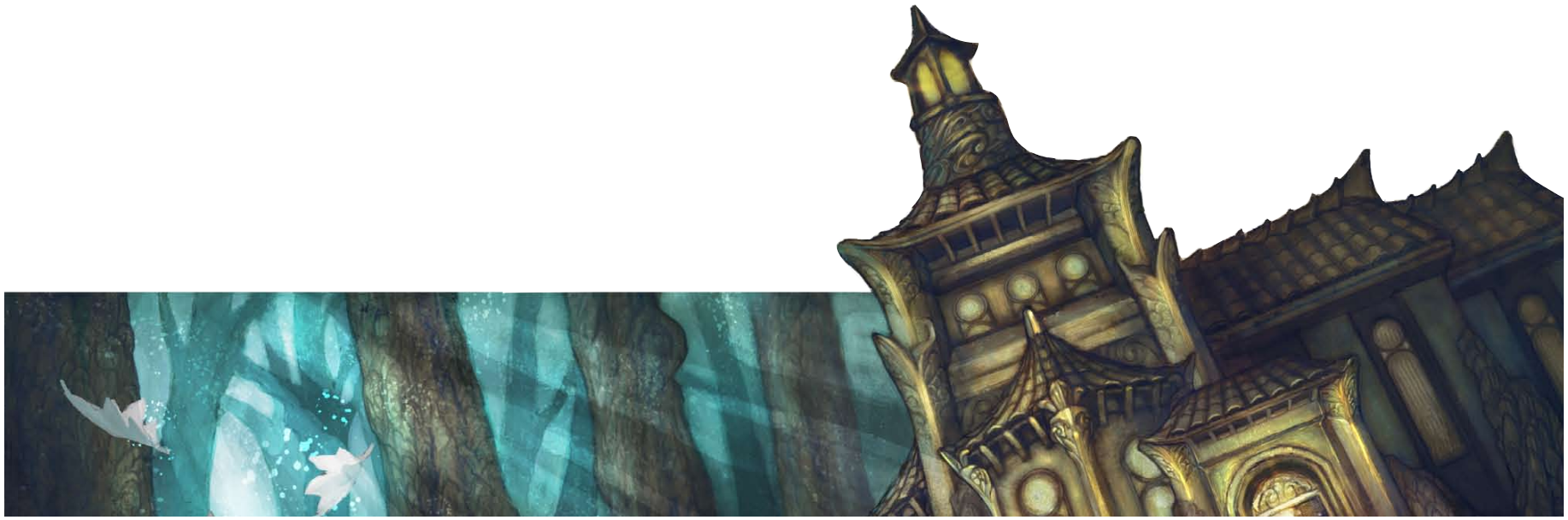
You become sheathed in flames and leave a trail of fire behind you as you take each step.

Encounter ✦ Fire, Full Discipline, Implement, Psionic
Attack Technique
Standard Action **Close** blast 3
Target: Each creature in blast
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 2d10 + Dexterity modifier fire damage.
Movement Technique
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You move your speed. Any enemy that hits you during this movement takes fire damage equal to 5 + your Wisdom modifier. Each square you leave during this movement is filled with fire until the end of your next turn, and a creature that enters a fire square or starts its turn there takes fire damage equal to 5 + your Wisdom modifier.

Three Winds Kick — Monk Attack 17

You move like a hurricane, dashing amid your enemies as you deliver a flurry of kicks.

Encounter ✦ Full Discipline, Psionic, Weapon
Attack Technique
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a monk weapon.
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 1[W] + Dexterity modifier + Wisdom modifier damage, and you shift 2 squares.
Effect: Make this attack two more times against the same target or different ones.
Movement Technique
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You move your speed + 2. You can use the attack technique at any point during this movement.



Level 19 Daily Disciplines

Inevitable Fist — Monk Attack 19

You strike at your foe. Dodge as it might, it cannot escape your attack.

Daily ✦ Implement, Psionic, Stance
Standard Action **Melee** touch
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity + 2 vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d10 + Dexterity modifier damage.
Miss: 2d10 + Dexterity modifier damage.
Effect: You assume the stance of the inevitable fist. Until the stance ends, your Flurry of Blows power deals 2 extra damage.

Rising Dragon Fire — Monk Attack 19

You focus your mind and execute a spinning kick that leaves a blazing inferno in its wake. You stand amidst the flames, daring any foe to draw near.

Daily ✦ Fire, Implement, Psionic, Zone
Standard Action **Close** burst 2
Target: Each creature in burst
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 5d6 + Dexterity modifier fire damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: The burst creates a fiery zone that lasts until the end of your next turn. When you hit a creature within the zone, that creature takes 2d6 extra fire damage.
Sustain Minor: The zone persists.

Level 23 Encounter Disciplines

Fist of Golden Fire — Monk Attack 23

You focus your psionic energy, transforming your fist into a brand of blazing radiance.

Encounter ✦ Full Discipline, Implement, Psionic, Radiant
Attack Technique
Standard Action **Melee** touch
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d10 + Dexterity modifier radiant damage. Make a secondary attack that is a close burst 1 centered on the primary target.
Secondary Target: Each enemy in burst
Secondary Attack: Dexterity vs. Fortitude
Hit: The secondary target is blinded until the end of your next turn.
Movement Technique
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You move your speed + 4.

Hungry Ghost — Monk Attack 23

You transform into a spectral version of yourself, and your strike gives you vitality.

Encounter ✦ Full Discipline, Implement, Psionic
Attack Technique
Standard Action **Melee** touch
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d10 + Dexterity modifier damage. You gain temporary hit points equal to 10 + your Wisdom modifier.
Movement Technique
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You gain phasing and become insubstantial until the end of your turn, and you move your speed.

Level 25 Daily Disciplines

Wandering Comet Strike — Monk Attack 25

You deliver a crushing blow to one foe, focus your psionic energy to step between the worlds, and repeat this attack again and again.

Daily ✦ Psionic, Teleportation, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a monk weapon.
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 3[W] + Dexterity modifier damage. You teleport to a square adjacent to a different enemy within 10 squares of you.
Miss: Half damage. You teleport to a square adjacent to a different enemy within 10 squares of you.
Effect: You can make the attack two more times. You can't attack a creature more than once with a single use of this power.

Watchful Hydra Technique — Monk Attack 25

You assume the hydra stance, making a series of quick attacks against enemies all around you.

Daily ✦ Implement, Psionic, Stance
Standard Action **Close** burst 3
Target: Each creature in burst
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 6d6 + Dexterity modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: You assume the watchful hydra stance. Until the stance ends, you can target an additional creature within 3 squares of you with your Flurry of Blows power.

Level 27 Encounter Disciplines

Celestial Drunken Boxer — Monk Attack 27

You shudder and stumble, yet there is a method to your madness. Each move is perfectly timed to mislead your enemies, causing them to attack each other.

Encounter ✦ Full Discipline, Implement, Psionic
Attack Technique
Standard Action **Close** burst 2
Target: Each enemy in burst
Attack: Dexterity vs. Will
Hit: As a free action, the target makes a melee basic attack against an enemy of your choice. The target gains a bonus to the attack roll and the damage roll equal to your Wisdom modifier.
Movement Technique
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You shift 4 squares.

Tap the Life Well — Monk Attack 27

Psionic energy flows through you, whisking you through space and disrupting your enemies' life forces.

Encounter ✦ Full Discipline, Implement, Psionic, Teleportation
Attack Technique
Standard Action **Melee** touch
Primary Target: One creature
Primary Attack: Dexterity vs. Fortitude
Hit: 2d8 + Dexterity modifier damage. You teleport to a square adjacent to an enemy within 6 squares of you. Then make a secondary attack.
Secondary Target: One enemy other than the primary target
Secondary Attack: Dexterity vs. Fortitude
Hit: The primary and secondary targets are dazed until the end of your next turn.
Movement Technique
Move Action **Personal**
Effect: You teleport to a square adjacent to an enemy within 6 squares of you.

Level 29 Daily Disciplines

Heart-Sundering Strike — Monk Attack 29

Your vicious blow causes supernatural agony to your foe. Slowly but surely, its life slips away.

Daily ✦ Psionic, Weapon
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a monk weapon.
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. AC
Hit: 5[W] + Dexterity modifier damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: The target takes ongoing 10 damage (save ends).
Each Failed Saving Throw: The ongoing damage increases by 5.

Mist on the Storm — Monk Attack 29

You transform into a ghostly figure and walk among your foes, your fists and feet passing through their armor like so much mist.

Daily ✦ Implement, Psionic, Stance
Standard Action **Close** blast 3
Target: Each creature in blast
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 7d6 + Dexterity modifier damage, and the target is weakened (save ends).
Miss: Half damage, and the target is weakened until the end of your next turn.
Effect: You assume the misty storm stance. Until the stance ends, you gain phasing. When you are hit by an attack, you can use an immediate interrupt to become insubstantial until the end of your next turn, and the stance ends.

PARAGON PATHS

Radiant Fist

"My power comes from within, and I wield it in the name of the gods."

Prerequisite: Monk, trained in Religion

You studied in a monastery devoted to the gods, guiding your mastery of psionic magic with the discipline and study of your faith. You likely worship Pelor or Bahamut, but almost every non-evil deity has a monastery dedicated to the martial arts.

Your monk abilities are touched by divine power, allowing you to channel radiant energy and tap into the astral realm. Like the typical monk, you move with incredible speed and hit with unmatched power, but the gods provide you with the ability to quash those who follow the gods of evil.

Dwarf monks are frequently drawn to this paragon path, for their piety and endurance allow them to withstand the mental and physical demands placed on a radiant fist.

Radiant Fist Path Features

Channel Divinity (11th level): You gain the Channel Divinity class feature, which means you can use a single Channel Divinity power per encounter. You also gain a divinity feat of your choice.

Radiant Fist's Action (11th level): When you spend an action point to take an extra action, you regain 15 hit points, and until the end of your next turn, your attacks that hit deal extra radiant damage equal to your Wisdom modifier.

Radiant Hammer Fists (16th level): When you deal damage with your Flurry of Blows power, you can make that damage radiant, instead of any other damage type. Also, when you score a critical hit with a monk or a radiant fist power, each enemy adjacent to you is blinded until the end of your next turn.

Radiant Fist Disciplines

Divine Sun — Radiant Fist Attack 11

Radiance surrounds you as you teleport yourself and a friend across the battlefield and sears through your enemy's defenses against divine light.

Encounter ✦ Divine, Full Discipline, Implement, Psionic, Radiant, Teleportation
Attack Technique
Standard Action **Melee** touch
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Will
Hit: 3d6 + Dexterity modifier radiant damage, and the target gains vulnerable 5 radiant until the end of your next turn.
Movement Technique
Move Action **Melee** 1
Target: You and one ally
Effect: The targets each teleport a number of squares equal to your speed + 2 to squares adjacent to each other.

Undimmed Sun — Radiant Fist Utility 12

Just as you begin to feel the weight of your wounds, you stand defiant as the gods heal you.

Daily ✦ Divine, Healing, Psionic
Minor Action **Personal**
Requirement: You must be bloodied.
Effect: You regain hits points as if you spent a healing surge. Until the end of the encounter, you gain resistance equal to your Wisdom modifier to all damage.

Rising Sun Technique — Radiant Fist Attack 20

You utter a prayer as the psionic energy within you flows into your attacks. With each strike, the divine radiance that burns within you grows stronger.

Daily ✦ Divine, Implement, Psionic, Radiant
Standard Action **Melee** weapon
Requirement: You must be wielding a monk weapon.
Target: One creature
Attack: Dexterity vs. Reflex
Hit: 3[W] + Dexterity modifier radiant damage.
Miss: Half damage.
Effect: Until the end of the encounter, you gain a +4 power bonus to damage rolls, and you can score a critical hit with monk powers and radiant fist powers on a roll of 19-20. When you score a critical hit with such powers, the target of the critical hit is blinded (save ends).

What's a Playtest Article?

A playtest article is your chance, as a *D&D Insider* subscriber, to offer feedback on some new rules that are scheduled to appear in an upcoming print product. In this case, the product is *Player's Handook 3*. Often, this content is still very rough (as in, it hasn't been through editing), and it's always still in the development process. You can email your playtest feedback to us directly at dndinsider@wizards.com. Just be sure to include "Playtest: PH3" in the subject line of your email.

Ghostwalker

"I ride the souls as they depart this world for the next."

Prerequisite: Monk

The Monastery of the Eternal Void stands at a crossroads where the Shadowfell washes against the world's shores. Some who study in the monastery delve into the Shadowfell's secrets, but many more contemplate the nature of life and death, the soul's final migration, and the fate awaiting all in the afterlife. Proximity to the darkened plane informed many of the monastery's fighting techniques as they developed into their current forms.

Your training at the monastery opened your inner eye, allowing you glimpses from this world into the realm of the dead. Those visions left a mark on you; your flesh grows pale, and dark circles ring your eyes, almost as if death's touch draws near. In spite of these changes, you are no less vital and possess uncanny insight into the nature of souls and their movements.

As a ghostwalker, you use psionic power to cloak yourself in shadow and thereby avoid enemy attacks. You also strike at a foe's life force, sapping its strength. Mastery of these techniques allows you to seize your enemy's soul and ride it to another location.

Ghostwalker Path Features

Ghostwalker's Action (11th level): When you spend an action point to make an attack and that attack hits an enemy granting combat advantage to you, the enemy is weakened until the end of your next turn.

Of Two Worlds (11th level): You gain concealment against any enemy granting combat advantage

to you. In addition, when any enemy misses you with a melee attack while you have concealment, you can shift 1 square as a free action.

Ride the Spirit (16th level): When you reduce an enemy to 0 hit points, you can teleport 5 squares as a free action. You gain combat advantage against each enemy adjacent to your destination space until the end of your next turn.

Ghostwalker Disciplines

Tormented Spirit — Ghostwalker Attack 11

Spirits whisk you and an enemy away, and you sap your foe's strength with your deadly touch.

Encounter ✦ Full Discipline, Implement, Necrotic, Psionic, Psychic, Teleportation
Attack Technique
Standard Action **Melee** touch
Target: One enemy granting combat advantage to you
Attack: Dexterity vs. Fortitude
Hit: 3d6 + Dexterity modifier necrotic and psychic damage, and the target is weakened until the end of your next turn.
Movement Technique
Move Action **Melee** 1
Targets: You and one enemy
Effect: The targets each teleport 5 squares to squares adjacent to each other. The enemy grants combat advantage to you until the end of your next turn.

Soul Dance — Ghostwalker Utility 12

Your form wavers, and your enemy thinks you are one place when, in a blink of an eye, you are somewhere else.

Daily ✦ Psionic, Stance, Teleportation
Standard Action **Personal**
Effect: Until the stance ends, you gain concealment. When any enemy misses you with a melee attack, you can use a free action to teleport to a square adjacent to that enemy and gain combat advantage against it until the end of your next turn.

Vengeful Ghost — Ghostwalker Attack 20

You strike your opponent with such force that you rattle its very soul. You teleport away, leaving it vengeful.

Daily ✦ Implement, Psionic, Teleportation
Standard Action **Melee** touch
Target: One enemy granting combat advantage to you
Attack: Dexterity vs. Will
Hit: 2[W] + Dexterity modifier damage, and the target is stunned (save ends).
Aftereffect: The target is dazed until it hits you with a melee attack.
Miss: Half damage, and the target is dazed (save ends).
Effect: You teleport 5 squares.

About the Authors

Rob Heinsoo led the design of the 4th Edition D&D Role-playing Game. His 4th Edition design credits include *Martial Power*™ and the *Forgotten Realms® Player's Guide*. His other game designs include *Three-Dragon Ante*™ and *Inn-Fighting*™.

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Domain of Dread: Graefmotte, the Font of Sorrows

By Robert J. Schwalb
Illustrations by William O'Connor

"Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori"

–Horace, Odes

Time hides tragedies, burying them in annals and histories scarcely read, but the Shadowfell is not so eager to relinquish these tales. Its realm holds vestiges from times past–seething pockets of human error and wickedness. Dark lords abound on this plane, and each was pulled into a misty domain to capture in amber their mortal failings. The plane makes new homes for the most desperate, depraved, and disturbed ever to walk the world of the living. Who can say how many dark lords are spawned by ancient conflicts punctuating the mortal world's long saga? How many traitors, cruel tyrants, and immoral deviants live on, trapped between life and death in a purgatory where they can while away time reflecting on the evils they wrought?

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A century ago, the last empire of humanity died, taking with it almost an entire generation of young men and women. Faced with the greatest horde of demons ever to trouble the world, humanity stood as a bulwark against the tide, fighting to preserve what had long shone as civilization's greatest beacon. Each family felt the war's cost—a son or daughter fallen to rending claws and teeth. With a nation imperiled, how could one not pay this price if the life of one child would mean the salvation of all? Many met the crown's demands, but a few resisted and did what they had to do to preserve their families. In the end, it didn't matter, for Nerath crumbled, its cities erased, its people scattered, and those who refused to lend their aid found no respite in the dark days that followed.

Graefmotte earned its place among the domains of dread when its lord murdered his own son rather than see him die on a battlefield, lost amid a sea of corpses. The lord's selfishness and refusal to accept the consequences for his actions drew the fell attention of the dark powers, and, for his crimes, he and all his people were trapped in the Shadowfell, where the drama and tragedy of one man's evil dooms them all.

History of Sorrows

The blood of royalty quenched Nerath's brilliant flame, spilled in the final charge against the gathered host of gnolls, demons, and other filth born from shadow. Humanity bled. Sons and daughters stood shoulder to shoulder against those who would tear down their noble works and plunge the world into darkness. Many paid the price, their kin lost in the carnage, their bones buried in the rubble of ruined cities, their ashes scattered in war's cruel winds. The gnolls were turned back, their leader flung into the Abyss's deepest bowels, but the cost was high, and, like so many that had risen before, humanity's hope fell into history, its bones littering the world alongside those of Arkhosia, Bael Turath, and so many others.

A Call to Arms

As history records, the gnoll host poured out from the hidden places, the barrens, and the wastelands, all clamoring for a chance to serve the albino gnoll tyrant remembered as the White Ruin. The destructive tide spilled across the land, leaving crimson rivers in its wake. King Elidyr, beloved and honored across the kingdom, called for his lords to raise their banners and to muster levies from the commoners and assemble an army to staunch the flood before all was lost. Most lords and their sons and daughters answered the king's call, serving their great leader, but a few held back, their terror blinding them to the duty demanded of them.

Lord Durven Graef was such a man. A minor lordling on Nerath's frontier, his holdings were far from the gnolls' path and, by all accounts, his people and lands were safe from the impending storm. Faced with troubles of his own—orcs infested the nearby mountains—and having already lost two sons, Graef was not so willing to send his last son to death fighting against distant enemies when he needed him at home to help protect his community from more pressing concerns. His son, Geoffrey, was not willing to set aside the responsibility their family owed to the crown and made ready to march when King Elidyr's summons arrived.

Lord Graef could not allow his son to leave. Geoffrey was the last of the Graef line. If the family would survive the war, Geoffrey would have to live. The noble argued with his son, begged him to stay—threatened him if he did not—but Geoffrey refused. There would be no convincing him, for youth's passion and blind patriotism kept him from seeing the greater responsibility. Geoffrey would leave and take with him Graefmotte's strength.

Murder

When the summons arrived, it came by way of a wounded messenger: a youth similar to young Geoffrey. Pierced by a half-dozen arrows, feverish from sickness, and eyes far older than the young man's true age, the messenger made Durven believe that if his son left, he would never return. After seeing to the messenger, Durven climbed the stone steps to his son's chamber to make his argument one final time. With each step, his resolve hardened and his certainty congealed: He knew his son would listen. He entered the room and saw his son and steward packing his belongings. It was then that Durven knew his son had made up his mind and all would end in ruin. Rather than conceding defeat, he ordered the steward to leave and when the door closed behind him, Durven gave into his fear and anger. When his shouts and demands failed, he used his fists. It happened quickly. They exchanged blows. Geoffrey stumbled, fell, and struck his head on a table. Durven stood over his son's twitching body, watching without remorse as his eyelids fluttered. Durven watched his son die.

The Shadow's Embrace

With Geoffrey's last breath, so went Lord Graef's sanity. The old lord fled the room, ordering it sealed, and he descended the stairs in panic. While his son lay dying, a gnoll force emerged from the shadowed woods, having followed the messenger across the countryside in search of supplies and plunder. The gnolls crashed into the unprepared village, slaughtering the inhabitants as they slept, and by the time Lord Graef emerged from his son's chambers, the gnolls had overrun the village.

A long night followed. Lord Graef led his meager forces in a counterstrike, smashing into the gnolls and scattering them before him. Shame, sorrow, and suffering flowed into each stroke, until Durven Graef became a killer as savage and remorseless as those who threatened his village. By dawn, the gnolls fled, leaving behind a ravaged community where the dead outnumbered the living.

Lord Graef sustained appalling injuries: He was nearly disemboweled by a gnoll spear and was missing an arm after a tangle with a hyena. Carried on a litter to his chambers, all expected his death, but over the day and night that followed, a silvery fog rolled in from the woods, swirling through the sundered homes and up the street and stairs. Tendrils wormed through the windows and doors, spilling in through the halls and into the rooms, then coalescing around Graef on his deathbed and around the dead young man who lay where his father left him. The mists covered Graefmotte, and then, when the sun set on the next day, the mists vanished to reveal a clear night sky filled with alien stars. Lord Durven Graef stirred from his sodden bed, his wounds healed and the dim awareness of all he had wrought flooding his mind.

Gone was Graefmotte from the mortal world and into the Shadowfell was the village and its people reborn.

Lord Durven Graef

Lord Durven Graef is a tortured soul—a man cursed for kinslaying and treason—and as long as he clings to the beliefs that what he did was best for his family and his people, ever shall he live, doomed to spend eternity bearing witness to what he wrought.

Lord Durven Graef's Tactics

Mounted on his steed, Gloom (see below), Durven makes a *deadly charge* attack against a leading defender. After, he draws *Graefling* and makes *grieving strike* attacks until he drops his opponent. Durven reserves *inspiring cry* until he is bloodied and continues fighting until slain.

Lord Durven Graef Level 8 Elite Skirmisher (Leader)
Medium shadow humanoid, human XP 700

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +6; darkvision
Guarding Presence aura 1; each ally within the aura gains a +2 bonus to AC and Will.
HP 170; **Bloodied** 85
Regeneration 5
AC 22; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 19
Vulnerable radiant (if Durven takes radiant damage, his regeneration does not function on his next turn).
Saving Throws +2
Speed 5
Action Points 1

⊕ **Graefling** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**
+13 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 damage (crit 2d8 necrotic damage + 16 damage). Against bloodied targets, Durven can reroll any 1 on *Graefling's* damage rolls.

⊕ **Lance** (standard; usable only while mounted; at-will) ✦**Weapon**
Reach 2; +13 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage, and if Durven scores a critical with this attack, or makes this attack against a creature granting him combat advantage, the target is also knocked prone.

† **Grieving Strike** (standard; requires *Graefling*; at-will) ✦ **Necrotic, Weapon**
+13 vs. AC; 1d10 + 6 damage (crit 2d8 necrotic damage + 16 damage), and each enemy adjacent to Durven takes 5 damage and grants combat advantage to him until the end of Durven's next turn. Against bloodied targets, Durven can reroll any 1 on *Graefling's* damage rolls.

† **Peerless Horseman** (immediate reaction, when Durven's mount is hit by a melee attack; at-will)
Targets the enemy that triggered this attack: +13 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 5 damage, and the mount gains resist 10 for the triggering attack.

✧ **Inspiring Cry** (minor; encounter)
Close burst 10; each ally in the burst gains 10 temporary hit points and a +1 power bonus to attack rolls until the end of Durven's next turn.

Deadly Charge (while mounted)
When making a charge attack, Durven deals 2d6 extra damage.

Mounted Combat
While Durven rides a creature, he gains access to any special mount abilities it confers to its rider, plus the creature can also make Athletics, Acrobatics, Endurance, or Stealth checks using Durven's base skill check bonus rather than its own if Durven's is higher.

Immortal Curse
Durven cannot die from natural causes and cannot be slain by mortal hands. If reduced to 0 hit points, he rises in his personal chambers with full hit points after 24 hours. Durven can be destroyed only if reduced to 0 hit points by a creature with the immortal origin.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Skills Diplomacy +12, History +9, Insight +11, Intimidate +12, Nature +11
Str 21 (+9) **Dex** 11 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+6)
Con 18 (+8) **Int** 10 (+4) **Cha** 16 (+7)
Equipment plate armor, heavy shield, *Graefling (bastard sword)*, lance

Durven Graef Lore

Arcana DC 20: The Graef family, though believed exterminated with Nerath, survives still as a domain in the Shadowfell. The last lord of the line rules a shadowy land in a gloomy wood, tucked away in a mountain vale far from civilized lands. A century might have passed since Graefmotte passed into the Shadowfell, but Lord Graef hasn't aged a day.

Arcana DC 25: A malign force lurking in the Shadowfell drew Graefmotte into the plane's cold embrace after Lord Graef murdered his son. Durven cannot die as long as he refuses to admit his betrayal to his blood and to his country, an admission this cursed lord is unlikely ever to make.

History DC 20: The Graefs were minor Nerathi lords believed to have died out in aftermath of the war against White Ruin. A distinguished line, they are remembered for their noble sacrifices and commitment to duty. Their banners featured a raven gripping *Graefling*, their ancestral blade, in its talons.

History DC 25: Although the Graefs had a storied past, the last Graef lord was believed to have betrayed the last Nerathi king and, for his treason, was murdered by a gnoll force that wiped out the lord's holdings and slaughtered his villagers. The ruins of Graefmotte still stand in a darkened corner of the Old Wood in the natural world, but they are reputed to be haunted.

Gloom **Level 6 Brute**
Large shadow beast (mount) XP 250

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +6; darkvision
HP 88; **Bloodied** 44
AC 20; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 18
Speed 7 (9 while charging)

⊕ **Kick** (standard; at-will)
+9 vs. AC; 1d8 + 6 damage.

† **Gloaming Gallop** (standard; at-will)
Gloom can move its speed and enter enemies' spaces, and Gloom must end its move in an unoccupied space. When it enters an enemy's space, Gloom makes an attack: +7 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 6 damage, and the target is blinded until the start of Gloom's next turn.

Shadowy Steed (while mounted by a friendly rider of 6th level or higher; at-will) ✦ **Mount**
Gloom grants its rider concealment.

Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Skills Endurance +12

Str 21 (+8)	**Dex** 17 (+6)	**Wis** 16 (+6)
Con 18 (+7)	**Int** 4 (+0)	**Cha** 10 (+3)

Equipment heavy barding

Graefling

The ancestral weapon wielded by twelve Graef lords retained none of its noble purpose when it was pulled into the Shadowfell. The blade is beautiful still even though it acquired a great number of sinister qualities. Its smoky gray blade has black whorls in the steel, and the blade emerges through a black crossbar with each side depicting an angel in flight. Dark leather, stained by sweat and blood, covers the handle down to the weapon's pommel, which is a raven in flight.

Graefling **Level 8**
Inky black tendrils spill from the blade, which promises an agonizing end for those who feel its bite.

Lvl 8 +2 3,400 gp
Weapon: Bastard Sword
Enhancement: Attack rolls and damage rolls
Critical: +2d8 necrotic damage.
Property: When used against bloodied enemies, this weapon gains brutal 1.
Property: When a creature is wielding *Graefling*, that creature has darkvision.
Power (Daily • Necrotic): Free Action. Use this power when you hit with a melee attack. Each creature adjacent to you takes 5 necrotic damage.

Graefmotte's Haunts

Graefmotte is home to the living, the dead, and those trapped between them.

Ghost

Durven Graef's murdered son did not rest easy in death. After he died, his corpse lay unburied on the floor of chambers no one dared enter until the domain shifted to the Shadowfell. After that, the body vanished when the ghost appeared, and no one knows where Geoffrey's bones now lie..

Ghost of Graefmotte	**Level 5 Elite Lurker**
Medium shadow humanoid (undead), ghost	XP 400
Initiative +7	**Senses** Perception +6; darkvision
Murder's Memory (**Fear**) aura 5; each enemy within the aura takes a -2 penalty to Will.	
HP 74; **Bloodied** 37	
AC 17; **Fortitude** 17, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 17	
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** insubstantial	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 6, fly 6 (hover), phasing	
Action Points 1	
⊕ **Fearsome Touch** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fear, Necrotic** +8 vs. Will; 1d4 + 2 necrotic damage, and the target slides 1 square.	
Combat Advantage ✦ **Necrotic** The Ghost of Graefmotte's melee attacks deal 2d6 extra necrotic damage to any target granting combat advantage to him.	
⸸ **Shared Nightmare** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Fear, Psychic** Requires combat advantage; +8 vs. Will; 2d4 + 2 psychic damage, and the target is dazed (save ends). *First Failed Saving Throw:* The target is stunned instead of dazed (save ends). *Second Failed Saving Throw:* The target is unconscious instead of stunned (save ends). *Aftereffect:* The target is dazed until the end of the Ghost's next turn.	
Fleeting Ghost (move; at-will) The Ghost of Graefmotte shifts 3 squares.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Common
Skills Stealth +8	
Str 15 (+4)	**Dex** 12 (+3) **Wis** 9 (+1)
Con 13 (+3)	**Int** 10 (+2) **Cha** 15 (+4)

The Ghost of Graefmotte's Tactics

The Ghost of Graefmotte imparts the horror of its murder in its attacks, filling the minds of enemies within his aura with terrible visions using *shared nightmare*, and while his foe is in the attack's grip, he drains the target's life with *fearsome touch*.

The Ghost of Graefmotte's Lore

History DC 25: The ghost haunting Graefmotte appeared after the gnolls struck the village, when the stars changed and the village transported to the gloom of the Shadowfell. It's believed the ghost is Geoffrey Graef, and that he seeks vengeance on his murderer.

Religion DC 15: The Ghost of Graefmotte is the undead remnant of Geoffrey Graef, the murdered son of Lord Durven Graef.

Religion DC 20: The ghost's attacks affect the mind, forcing its prey to relive the final moments of its life and awaken to the horror of utter betrayal and murder. Foes facing the ghost find themselves dogged and driven by spectral assailants.

Encounter Groups

The Ghost of Graefmotte lingers in the keep and draws in other ghosts and phantoms created during the gnoll attack on the village.

Level 4 Encounter (XP 925)

- ✦ Ghost of Graefmotte (level 5 elite lurker)
- ✦ 3 phantom warriors (level 4 soldier)

Gnoll

Driven by an unspeakable appetite for hot blood and quivering flesh, the gnolls slain by Graefmotte's defenders menace the village even as undead horrors prowl the Ill Wood.

Gnoll Scavenger	Level 3 Soldier
Medium natural humanoid (undead)	XP 150
Initiative +5	**Senses** Perception +0; darkvision
HP 46; **Bloodied** 23	
AC 19; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 12	
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 necrotic; **Vulnerable** 5 radiant	
Speed 7	
⊕ **Claws** (standard; at-will)	
+10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage.	
⸸ **Grisly Feast** (standard; at-will)	
Immobilized, stunned, or unconscious targets only; +10 vs. AC; 2d8 + 4 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends).	
⸸ **Ferocious Charge** (standard; recharge ⚅)	
The gnoll scavenger charges and makes the following attack instead of its basic attack: +10 vs. AC; 1d8 + 4 damage, and the target is immobilized (save ends).	
Blood Fury (while bloodied)	
The gnoll scavenger gains a +2 bonus to damage rolls.	
Alignment Chaotic evil	**Languages** Abyssal, Common
Str 17 (+4)	**Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 9 (+0)
Con 14 (+3)	**Int** 8 (+0) **Cha** 6 (-1)

Gnoll Scavenger Tactics

The gnoll scavenger attacks the first enemy it sees using *ferocious charge* and then *claws* its enemy so it can use *grisly feast*.

Encounter Groups

Gnoll scavengers collect in packs, prowling the night in search of victims. Some still keep company with living hyenas and gnolls.

Level 4 Encounter (XP 950)

- ✦ 3 gnoll scavengers (level 3 soldier)
- ✦ 4 hyenas (level 2 skirmisher)

Griefmote

When night falls, the dead stir. Griefmotes are tiny sparks of unliving, glowing orbs that chill the flesh and rend the mind.

Griefmote	Level 3 Lurker
Tiny shadow magical beast (undead)	XP 150
Initiative +8	**Senses** Perception +3; darkvision
HP 24; **Bloodied** 12	
AC 16; **Fortitude** 13, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15	
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 cold, insubstantial	
Speed fly 4 (hover)	
⊕ **Chilling Touch** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Necrotic**	
Reach 0; +6 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 3 necrotic damage, and the target is slowed until the end of its next turn.	
⇙ **Chill of the Grave** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold**	
Close burst 2; +4 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 3 cold damage, and the target gains vulnerable 3 cold (save ends).	
Invisibility (minor; at-will) ✦ **Illusion**	
The griefmote becomes invisible until the end of its next turn or until it attacks.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** understands Common
Skills Stealth +9	
Str 5 (-2)	**Dex** 17 (+4) **Wis** 14 (+3)
Con 11 (+1)	**Int** 4 (-2) **Cha** 8 (+0)

Griefmote Tactics

Griefmotes lurk invisibly, converging on living victims undetected so they can use *chill of the grave* to chip away at their foes' defenses. Once a foe becomes vulnerable to cold, they use *chilling touch* and use *invisibility* to dart away undetected.

Griefmote Cloud	Level 8 Lurker
Medium shadow magical beast (undead, swarm)	XP 350
Initiative +13	**Senses** Perception +12; darkvision
Cold Spot (Cold) aura 1; each enemy that starts its turn within the aura takes 5 cold damage.	
HP 65; **Bloodied** 32	
AC 22; **Fortitude** 18, **Reflex** 22, **Will** 20	
Immune disease, poison; **Resist** 10 cold, insubstantial; **Vulnerable** 10 against close and area attacks	
Speed fly 4 (hover)	
⊕ **Chilling Assault** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Cold, Necrotic**	
+11 vs. Fortitude; 1d8 + 5 necrotic damage, and the target gains vulnerable 5 cold (save ends).	
⇙ **Feast of Sorrows** (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Cold, Necrotic**	
Close burst 2; +11 vs. Fortitude; 1d6 + 5 necrotic damage plus 1d8 cold damage, and the target gains vulnerable 5 necrotic (save ends).	
Invisibility (minor; at-will) ✦ **Illusion**	
The griefmote cloud becomes invisible until the end of its next turn or until it attacks.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** understands Common
Skills Stealth +14	
Str 5 (+1)	**Dex** 21 (+9) **Wis** 16 (+7)
Con 11 (+4)	**Int** 4 (+1) **Cha** 11 (+4)

Griefmote Tactics

A griefmote cloud closes on the closest living enemy and makes a *chilling assault* attack. If the target is still adjacent by the start of the griefmote cloud's next turn, it uses *feast of sorrows* and *invisibility* to protect itself from reprisals.

Griefmote Lore

Religion DC 15: When an innocent dies, sometimes a spirit fragment survives the soul's migration from the flesh to the Shadowfell. These fragments preserve the victim's final suffering.

Encounter Groups

Griefmotes sometimes form into clouds. One can also find griefmotes in the company of other insubstantial undead, such as ghosts, wraiths, and specters.

Level 10 Encounter (XP 2,450)

- ✦ 5 griefmote clouds (level 8 lurker)
- ✦ 1 wailing ghost (level 12 controller)

Human

Humans are, if anything, adaptable. Often, the result is great achievement, but sometimes human resilience and determination produces something dark and terrible.

Eater of the Dead	**Level 3 Brute**
Medium shadow humanoid, human	XP 150
Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +5	
HP 41; **Bloodied** 20	
AC 17; **Fortitude** 16, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 13	
Speed 6	
⊕ **Cleaver** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+8 vs. AC; 1d6 + 3 damage.	
⸸ **Grisly Feast** (immediate reaction, when an adjacent eater of the dead hits with *horrific bite*)	
The eater of the dead makes a melee basic attack as a free action.	
⸸ **Horrific Bite** (minor 1/round; at-will)	
Requires combat advantage; +6 vs. Reflex; target takes ongoing 5 damage (save ends).	
Unspeakable Hunger (while bloodied)	
The eater of the dead gains a +2 bonus to attack rolls and damage rolls.	
Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Common	
Skills Intimidate +6, Stealth +8	
Str 16 (+4) **Dex** 14 (+3) **Wis** 9 (+0)	
Con 11 (+1) **Int** 8 (+0) **Cha** 11 (+1)	
Equipment leather armor, cleaver, bloody patina	

Eater of the Dead Tactics

Eaters of the dead swarm one enemy at a time, slashing with *cleavers* and tearing with *horrific bites*.

Eater of the Dead Lore

Nature DC 15: The eaters of the dead were once human but because they feasted on human remains while being affected by the palpable malaise of the Shadowfell, a subtle transformation occurred. These humans became something less—something bestial and merciless.

Encounter Groups

Eaters of the Dead are cowards, so they work in numbers, skulking through shadows to ambush unsuspecting enemies. Some follow ghouls, dogging their steps for whatever leavings they can steal.

Level 3 Encounter (XP 800)

- ✦ 4 eaters of the dead (level 3 lurker)
- ✦ 1 ghoul (level 5 soldier)

A Light in the Forest

The Graefmotte stands in the heart of a forlorn pine forest nestled between two arms of the Gloomcrag Mountains. Such is the height of these somber peaks, the sun shines into the valley they create through the middle part of the day only, and the mornings and afternoons are gloomy periods with deep shadows pooling beneath the boughs. The valley is remote enough that only the rare traveler has the misfortune of stumbling into the domain. Of those that do, few emerge from the beshadowed woods because peril lies in wait for the unwary and the domain's lord is loath to allow visitors to carry word of his crimes beyond his realm.

What Wanders the Ill Wood?

The Graefmotte is a dangerous place, but it's made more so by the Ill Wood. In the quiet gloom cast by its tall trees, ghouls, ghosts, and other undead prowl due to feeling drawn to the region's unmistakable corrup-

tion. As well, numerous gnolls, some descendants of those brutal marauders, still claim the forest as their own, and lure the unwary into traps and ambushes.

Ambience

The Ill Wood has a character of its own, and when the PCs first visit the forest, you can mention some or all the following to help set the mood and foreshadow the curse hanging over the place.

Bones: Bones litter the forest. Most are of human origin, but gnoll, goblin, and other bones are here as well. Some stand in piles, carefully arranged, while others hide beneath beds of brown needles, buried in mud, or propped up on staves driven into the soft earth.

Hanged People: Lord Graef does not tolerate unrest, and his punishment is swift. Those who draw the lord's ire face death on a rope dangling from a branch in the forest. There they hang like rotten fruit. Some victims awaken as zombies, writhing and twitching, futilely struggling to escape the rope holding them.

Sounds: The Ill Wood is quiet. Few animals stir in the woods because they have been hunted to extinction by the starving villagers. Savage humanoids, cannibalistic humans, and endless undead stalk the woods, hunting each other in the gloom.

Wreckage: Debris, old banners, carts, and more rot throughout the woods, remnants from the gnoll attack on Graefmotte a century ago.

Ill Wood Encounters

Characters traveling through the forest might find themselves faced with all manner of monsters, living and dead, and sometimes mixtures of both.

Dead Soldiers, Level 2 (XP 625)
Those who died defending Graefmotte do not rest easy in the graves with the knowledge that their once safe harbor has fallen under the shadow of a mad and immortal tyrant.

- 4 decrepit skeletons (level 1 minion)
- 3 phantom soldiers (level 4 soldier)

Lord Graef does not tolerate unrest, and his punishment is swift. Those who draw the lord's ire face death on a rope dangling from a branch in the forest.

Graveyard, Level 2 (XP 650)
An old graveyard, long forgotten, lies beneath a thick layer of pine needles. Gray stones jut up at odd angles throughout the area. At night, the griefmotes emerge to prowl the darkest hours in search of the living.

- 1 griefmote cloud (level 8 lurker)
- 2 griefmotes (level 3 lurker)

Manslayers, Level 3 (XP 825)
A gnoll huntmaster leads a hyena pack in search of food. A fresh meal lures the group into rash attacks against superior numbers.

- 1 gnoll huntmaster (level 5 artillery)
- 5 hyenas (level 2 skirmisher)

Carrion Eaters, Level 5 (XP 1,050)
Famine has made many villagers into cannibals, and those who make a habit of eating sentient creatures sometimes transform into ghouls. A pack of ghouls joined forces with several gnoll scavengers to find victims to fill their bellies.

- 3 ghouls (level 5 soldier)
- 3 gnoll scavengers (level 3 soldier)

Ride of the Fell Lord, Level 8 (XP 1,850)
Lord Graef sometimes rides the woods with a mob of loyal followers in tow. Searching for intruders, gnolls, or rebels, he attacks first and sorts out the mess later.

- Lord Durven Graef (level 8 elite skirmisher)
- Gloom (level 6 brute)
- 12 human lackeys (level 7 minion)

Exploring the Ill Wood

Characters in the Ill Wood can locate the Graefmotte far easier than they can find the way out. At various points while traveling the forest, they might catch sight of the green lights shining from the city in the hill, or catch a whiff of smoke, or the sounds of music. As long as the characters head for the village, they have little trouble. If they turn back, however, the forest works against them. Trees and landmarks shift positions to confuse and confound them. In effect, the characters are lost when trying to escape the forest and they must succeed on a Lost in the Wilderness skill challenge (*Dungeon Master's Guide page* 79) against DCs appropriate for their level.

Graefmotte

Graefmotte rises above the treetops at the forest's center. Clinging to the sides of a lone butte like barnacles on a ship are houses, shops, taverns, and inns, all looking out over the woods and their dim lights glittering in the darkness. A single road cut from the rock makes a circuit around the hill, climbing round and round until it ends at the summit where Lord Graef makes his home. Rather than walk the one road up or down to higher and lower levels, stone stairs offer shortcuts to higher levels. Stone statues gripping iron lanterns, each lit at dusk and casting dim green light in all directions, light the rocky path. Carved to resemble cloaked and hooded men, at night they are every bit as ghastly as the undead stalking the community.

Graefmotte's structures emerge from the hill. About a quarter of the total building's size stands outside, with the rest inside. Walls, ceiling, and floor are cut from the butte's rock. The buildings use the stone pulled from the hill to construct the façades and most follow a style similar to the gargoyles lining the roads.

No trade exists in Graefmotte except between the locals. Food is scarce and people subsist on rats, beetles, and other vermin, or from the meager crops harvested from fields near the hill's base. A few citizens have turned to cannibalism, but since the practice is forbidden, no one advertises deviant culinary interests.

The buildings near the base are in ruins, still bearing the scars of the gnolls' attack years ago. No one living descends below the trees at night for fear of the things in the woods. Higher up the hill, the village is in better shape and preserved much as it was when the village was first built.

Graefmotte

A dying community, Graefmotte covers a rocky mound and preserves the crimes of its lord for all to see.

Population: 430 (living). Most here are human, though there are a few halflings, half-elves, and shadar-kai. In addition to the living, ghouls infest the lower levels, hiding by day and emerging at night to snatch a villager by moonlight.

Government: Durven Graef rules Graefmotte. He inherited the title from his father. Graef is a despot. Nothing happens in Graefmotte without his approval.

Defense: Lord Graef commands a garrison of commoners as his soldiers. Though better fed and clothed, their numbers fluctuate as disease, hunger, and ghouls take their tolls. Currently, there are twenty active militia (use human lackey statistics, *Monster Manual* page 162).

Inns: The Halfway House.

Taverns: The Crow's Feast, the Graef's Graft, and the Crooked Door.

Supplies: Reinholt's Supplies.

Temples: Temple of Erathis, House of the Mourning (Raven Queen).

Graefmotte's Origins

Five hundred years before Graefmotte's shift to the Shadowfell,, Phillip Graef conquered the hill on which Graefmotte now stands, seizing it from the bandits who had themselves claimed squatters' rights on the old dwarven fort a decade prior. Rooting out the bandits won the Graefs the hill and the surrounding lands to rule as they saw fit. As a tiny fief, Graefmotte paid tribute in coin and levies, and though the village had a modest economy, it was never wealthy enough for the Graef family to expand their holdings or to ascend any further in station or prestige. Instead, the Graefs won glory and honor through their fearlessness and the quality of the soldiers they trained.

The murder and treachery wrought by Lord Durven resulted not in the migration of the old fortified village, but rather the wholesale abduction of its people and lord by the Shadowfell's baleful powers to take residence in the plane's dark reflection. In the natural world, Graefmotte is in ruins—an emptied village reduced to rubble by war. In the Shadowfell, Graefmotte is similar, but occupied, with nearly five generations of shadowborn humans fated to spend their lives under the yoke of a mad tyrant.

Word on the Street

Characters can learn information about Graefmotte by succeeding on a Streetwise check.

DC 13: Graefmotte is a tiny village that is home to a few hundred souls. Food is scarce and common goods are hard to come by. Lord Durven Graef rules the village from his castle on the summit.

DC 15: People warn against walking the streets by night because the eaters of the dead prowl. Those who succumbed to hunger now eat their kin. Some whisper the village lies under a curse, though none speak of why.

DC 20: Ghosts and undead haunt the village. At night, ghouls emerge from the forest and ruined buildings near the base to prey on the living, while

ghosts flutter through the streets. The most haunted place of all, though, is the lord's keep.

DC 25: Locals claim Lord Graef is immortal, and since he doesn't appear to grow older, his physical appearance supports these claims. All sorts of rumors swirl about the noble, including eyewitnesses to his many suicides. Each time the lord dies, he returns without a scar. It is by this fact alone the people of Graefmotte are still loyal; they are too afraid to rise up against the tyrant.

DC 30: Some believe Lord Graef murdered his own son and that he wanted his son dead here rather than dead on some battlefield with all the rest of those who stood up against the gnolls. Kinslaying brought on the curse.

Important Locations

The following locations can be found at various points around the hill. Each location includes a designation to establish its position relative to the other locations in the village. A low tier means the location lies below the tree tops. A mid tier means the site occupies the middle band around the hill, above the trees, but below the hill's heights. The upper tier is nearest to the top and includes the homes and businesses of Graefmotte's wealthiest citizens.

Graef's Graft (Low)

A shabby structure spills out from a hole burrowed into the hillside. Bowed steps lead up to a porch and door set in the middle. Feeble light shines through boarded windows, and a forlorn sign hangs from a single nail proclaiming the place Graef's Graft.

Graefmotte's oldest tavern, this place once served the dwarves who quarried this strange hill. It is a place with an ominous reputation and shady clientele. Oddly, it is the safest place in the village, because a defrocked priest of Asmodeus named Edgar runs it. He has destroyed enough undead now that the ghouls wandering the long road are too afraid of him to consider the Graft's patrons as prey.

The tavern consists of a single long room with sagging ceiling, warped walls, and a bar running the entire length. A few wobbly tables with mismatched chairs fill the open space, while barstools front the bar. Edgar's stores are low, but he can offer watery beer or vinegary wine.

Through a concealed door in the back one finds Edgar's personal quarters, a small shrine dedicated to the Lord of Nessus, and two small rooms for patrons who can afford Edgar's steep price.

Brother Edgar: A quiet man of severe disposition and few words, Edgar spends most days leaning against the bar, chewing on *olt,* a local root harvested for its ability to quiet hunger pangs and for its narcotic qualities. He might be unfriendly, but he never turns away business.

Edgar once served in the evil church of Asmodeus, attaining a modest station among his peers. When an ambitious initiate thought to murder him, Edgar's rebuke was swift and lethal. The boy, however, was the high priest's son, and thus Edgar slipped away before his superior could retaliate. He's still devout to the dark god, but he feels as though he has failed his master and must now spend his days suffering until the moment he's called to serve again.

Brother Edgar	**Level 5 Soldier (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 200
Initiative +2	**Senses** Perception +4
HP 62; **Bloodied** 31	
AC 20; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 17	
Speed 5	
⊕ **Morningstar** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+12 vs. AC; 1d10 + 4 damage, and the target is marked until the end of Edgar's next turn.	
Turn Undead (standard; encounter) ✦ **Radiant**	
Targets undead; close burst 2; +7 vs. Will; 2d10 + 2 radiant damage, the target is pushed 3 squares, and the target is immobilized until the end of Edgar's next turn. *Miss:* Half damage, and the target is not pushed or immobilized.	
Ruby Glare (minor 1/round; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Fear**	
Ranged 5; +11 vs. Will; on a hit, the target slides 1 square and is weakened (save ends).	
Painful Restoration (minor 1/round; at-will, 2/encounter) ✦ **Healing**	
The target spends a healing surge, regains hit points equal to its surge value, and is weakened until the end of its next turn.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common
Skills Intimidate +7, Religion +8	
Str 19 (+6)	**Dex** 10 (+2) **Wis** 15 (+4)
Con 14 (+4)	**Int** 12 (+3) **Cha** 11 (+2)
Equipment scale armor, morningstar	

House of Mourning (Low)

Dark stone faces the hill here, fronted by two black caryatid columns of armored women who support a wedgelike roof with a frieze depicting ravens intermingled with skeletons. Stone doors stand closed and each bears a bas-relief carving of a perched raven.

One of two temples found in Graefmotte, the House of Mourning is a location the locals shun because they believe the place is cursed and filled with cannibals—rumors spread by the butcher, Rolf (see page 74). Once, Madelyn Osterford, the temple's lone priestess, would have cared, but long years in Graefmotte

leached away her resolve. She alone maintains the temple—its empty corridors and vaults are hers to do with as she pleases.

The interior is dank and musty, with the faintest whiff of rotting flowers in the air. The main chamber is the hall proper, where old black pews stand in two rows marching up to a dais where a bone lectern stands. Two doors stand behind the dais. One leads to the vaults where the dead were once prepared for burial. The other ends in a cluster of small rooms, which are residences for the temple's clergy.

Madelyn Osterford: Madelyn's use for religion has diminished over the years, and with it went the power she once wielded in the Raven Queen's name. She still goes through the ceremonies required by her office, intoning old prayers in her quavering voice. Madelyn was once beautiful, with long black hair and pale skin, but long years spent drinking at the Graef's Graft have taken their toll. Her face is haggard, wrinkled, framed by gray brittle hair, and dominated by a red and runny nose. Her eyes are yellowed and she hasn't a tooth in her mouth thanks to the *olt* she chews.

Although stripped of her prayers, Madelyn still knows and can perform several rituals, including Brew Potion, Cure Disease, Sending, and Speak with Dead.

The Crow's Feast (Low)

Stone steps lead up to the wooden façade emerging from the hillside and a heavy wooden door bound with iron set in the center. A weathered sign bearing a crow plucking an eye from a corpse hangs out over the street.

Another tavern, the Crow's Feast, stands just below the trees, and from its upper windows one can see the whole countryside. The interior has booths along one wall opposite the bar and a dozen barstools. Behind the bar is a great mirror, but it's cracked and the silver beneath is tarnished. There are four rooms for rent, none of which are occupied. Each features a bed, nightstand, pitcher of tepid water, and a few suspicious stains.

The wife that people think Gregor buried a few years back is still around, chained to a wall in the cellar. A vicious and starving ghoul, she has killed and eaten nosy guests who descended the steps to her lair

The owner is Gregor Ustri, a middle-aged gaunt man with a bald head and heavy jowls. He's blind in his left eye and drums the fingers on his left hand when he talks. Helping him are twin girls, both emaciated, named Lisa and Lyza. Lisa's nose was broken years ago, which is how Gregor tells them apart.

Gregor and his daughters are honest folk, hungry like everyone else, but fair with their customers. They have a terrible secret, though: The wife that people think Gregor buried a few years back is still around, chained to a wall in the cellar. A vicious and starving ghoul, she has killed and eaten nosy guests who descended the steps to her lair in search of the moaning that sounds throughout the night.

The Halfway House (Mid)

Three stories of wood and glass front this building perched midway up the hill. Welcoming letters in red paint declare the building as the Halfway House. Nearby, a large barn offers refuge for wagons and horses.

Once deemed the finest boarding house in all Graefmotte, the Halfway House is now the sole functioning hostel in the village. Equipped with a dozen rooms divided between the second and third floors, a taproom and restaurant on the ground floor, and a big stable nearby, in its heyday, the Halfway House was a popular stop for merchants and adventurers alike.

Old swords, stuffed heads, and armor still decorate the interior, and though the beds are as comfortable as they ever were, the food leaves a lot to be desired. The Halfway House makes do with salted meat of suspicious origin, thin soups with a few bits of vegetable or strands of sour flesh, and soapy ale. Martha and Guy apologize to their guests, lamenting the state of their fine village and make up for the poor fare with music played by Rudolf, a young minstrel with sad eyes, and dancing by Anna and Breen, two women who'd do anything for a crust of bread.

Like others in the village, Martha and Guy are not what they seem. Having buried their son when he starved to death, the pair gave their souls to Orcus for the promise of food. The innkeepers are the secret source of ghouls and they perform dread rituals on villagers to complete the transformation from cannibal to undead horror. They grieve about what they've become, cursing Lord Graef, but continue their fell

Martha and Guy	**Level 3 Skirmisher**
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 150 each
Initiative +6	**Senses** Perception +5
HP 46; **Bloodied** 23	
AC 17; **Fortitude** 12, **Reflex** 16, **Will** 15	
Speed 6	
⊕ **Cruel Knife** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+8 vs. AC; 2d4 + 3 damage, and the target grants combat advantage to Martha and Guy until the start of its next turn.	
Combat Advantage	
Martha and Guy's melee attacks deal 1d6 extra damage to any target granting combat advantage to it.	
⸸ **Blood Dance** (standard; while bloodied; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Requires cruel knife; +8 vs. AC; 3d4 + 3 damage, and Martha or Guy (whichever one is attacking) can shift 2 squares as a free action.	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Common
Skills Bluff +8, Insight +5, Stealth +9, Streetwise +8	
Str 8 (+0) **Dex** 17 (+4)	**Wis** 9 (+0)
Con 9 (+0)	**Int** 12 (+2) **Cha** 14 (+3)
Equipment leather aprons, cruel knives	

endeavor, feeding more souls to the gluttonous demon prince of undead.

Martha and Guy keep a shrine behind a false wall in their cellar (DC 15 Perception). It is a blood-drenched room with a pentagram scratched onto the rocky floor. At your discretion, a few eaters of the dead might sit in cages waiting their turns to be reborn into undead.

Neither the minstrel nor the dancers are aware of the innkeeper's true allegiances.

Reinholt's Supplies (Mid)

Small and unimpressive, this general store is constructed from crude stone of a similar kind to that of the basalt hill. A glass window covered with bars reveals sparsely populated shelves and a smattering of goods.

With few merchants and little resources, Reinholt has a hard time stocking his shelves. He might have closed his doors, but he has no idea what he would do then. Reinholt has a 50% chance of having any mundane piece of adventuring gear (except for rations, of which he has none). As for ritual ingredients, he has 25 gp worth of alchemical reagents, mystic salves, rare herbs, and sanctified incense each.

Though a considerable amount of human, half-elf, and plump halfling meat are present in his sausages, Rolf gets legitimate meat too.

The interior consists of bare wooden shelves set up against roughhewn walls. Dust collects in the corners and cobwebs sway between shelves. A few barrels and bins hold ordinary goods such as nails and hooks, but all in small amounts and priced far higher than they are worth.

Reinholt is a middle-aged male half-elf, spare of frame and with narrow, pinched features. He wears a threadbare burgundy doublet, patched breeches, and a dagger on his belt. He's suspicious of anyone snooping about, but if handled with care and respect, he opens up and reveals information as if the PCs had succeeded on a DC 25 Streetwise check.

Butcher's Block (Mid)

The door to this squat building stands open to reveal a dirty tile floor and long counter running the shop's length. Lantern light reveals stains, a butcher block, and a few haunches of meat crawling with flies.

Like everyone else, Rolf, the butcher, has seen a downturn in business. He's butchered all the goats, cows, and pigs in the village, and Graefmotte's people haven't had pets in at least a generation. Somehow, Rolf still supplies meat to the people, grinding up whatever hunters bring in and turning it into sausage. Most people suspect foul play, but hunger keeps them from asking too many questions.

Rolf is wealthy and is one of the village's prominent citizens. His word carries a great deal of weight and his whispers about the House of Mourning have painted the priestess there as a villain. Rolf spreads these rumors so he can expand his business to include funeral services, taking a bit of meat from the dead to replenish his stores.

Though a considerable amount of human, half-elf, and plump halfling meat are present in his sausages, Rolf gets legitimate meat too. He made an agreement with the gnolls in the woods. They supply Rolf with fresh kills in exchange for slaves, supplies, and information about Graefmotte's defenses. Rolf knows the gnolls will attack again, but he believes the gnolls will spare him.

Standing just shy of 7 feet tall with close-cropped black hair, craggy features, and black eyes, Rolf cuts an impressive figure. When working, he slips a heavy mail apron on to deflect flying bone fragments. He has a slight lisp and his teeth are a nightmarish tangle of rotten brown spurs. He smells of milk.

Crooked Door (Mid)

A modest winesink, this building of wood, stone, and plaster emerges from the hillside sporting a peaked roof and half a dozen gray windows. The door stands closed and scratches mar its wooden surface.

The Crooked Door was a fine tavern a little over halfway up the hill. Named for its leaning architecture, it was a popular stop in the day. Now, it suffers like every place else, and only a few middle-class patrons dine and drink here.

Karl Kesterton, the owner, has stayed in business by catering to the local garrison and those loyal to Lord Graef. Gaining foodstuffs from the noble's stores, he offers better fare than that offered anywhere else in the community. While this does keep him in gold, he must report suspicious folk to the authorities. Many locals wound up hanged in the forest on Kesterton's suspicions alone.

Rolf the Butcher	**Level 6 Elite Brute**
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 500
Initiative +3 **Senses** Perception +5	
HP 174; **Bloodied** 87	
AC 16; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 15, **Will** 17	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 6	
Action Points 1	
⊕ **Hammer** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+9 vs. AC; 1d6 + 5 damage, and the target is dazed (save ends), and the target is marked until the end of Rolf's next turn.	
⊕ **Cleaver** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+9 vs. AC; 1d6 + 5 damage, and ongoing 5 damage (save ends), and the target is marked until the end of Rolf's next turn.	
⸸ **Pound and Slice** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Rolf makes a hammer and cleaver attack.	
Menacing Pursuit (immediate interrupt, when an adjacent enemy marked by Rolf would move or shift; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
Rolf shifts 1 square and makes a melee basic attack.	
Alignment Evil **Languages** Abyssal, Common	
Skills Athletics +13, Intimidate +9, Nature +10	
Str 20 (+8) **Dex** 10 (+3) **Wis** 15 (+5)	
Con 17 (+6) **Int** 11 (+3) **Cha** 12 (+4)	
Equipment mail apron, hammer, cleaver	

Garrison (Upper)

A post holds an old banner out over the street, its colors bleached to a mottled gray. Nearby a stocks and an iron pole from which hangs a crow's nest and the bones of its last occupant stand ready for their next guests.

Many years have passed since quality people served in the watch. Now, they are little better than thugs and brutes of suspect morals who crave power and use fear to maintain the lord's law. The watch patrols the village during the day, but not even they dare take to the streets at night.

The garrison has two floors. The first houses the watch commander's office, private quarters, and four cells for prisoners—many of whom are marched into the woods and strung up. The second floor holds the barracks for a score of watchmembers in one open room with bunks for twice as many guards.

Human guards make up half of the watch; the rest are human lackeys (*Monster Manual* page 162 for both). Lord Graef executed the last watch commander and the post has been vacant ever since.

Temple of Erathis (Upper)

White stone contrasts with the otherwise bleak village. Civilization's rising sun painted in gaudy yellow adorns the lintel over the stone doors, signifying the temple's allegiance to Erathis.

The exquisite Temple of Erathis stands just below the hill's summit. Each member of the Graef family was a devout follower of this faith since the lands came into their possession. Lord Graef is lax and rarely attends services. Still, he maintains his family's donations and is the temple's greatest sponsor in Graefmotte.

Father Alcester, the head priest, is on good terms with Lord Graef and is a vocal supporter. Alcester is the only person in Graefmotte who knows the Traveler's Feast ritual, and he guards this knowledge closely. Each day, he performs the ritual several times, enough to feed himself and his attendant priests, with enough left over to distribute to the poorest citizens. He knows it's insufficient to aid the entire community, which is why he has spent the last few months working on a greater version to produce more. The rare herbs required for both Traveler's Feast and the ritual he perfects are running out, forcing him to turn to volunteers to range farther afield to hunt for these supplies.

Not all in the temple share Alcester's enthusiasm for the Graef family. Sister Regina, a lesser priestess, sees her superior's efforts as futile and tainted by the funds and encouragement coming from Graefmotte Castle. That Lord Graef has done little to nothing to stop the widespread infestation of ghouls, since he is preoccupied with the gnolls ranging in the surrounding woods, suggests to Regina the long-lived lord would rather see a population of undead horrors than help the village throw off the shackles of fear and hunger.

For this reason, Sister Regina amasses supplies to lead those souls who have yet to succumb to eating human flesh out from Graefmotte and find new lives somewhere far from the village. She's gathered a dozen likeminded villagers and preparations are underway for their dangerous exodus.

Graefmotte Keep (Top)

At the hill's summit stands a gloomy castle consisting of four equidistant towers connected by steep walls. A yawning gate stands open and grants access to the weed-choked yard and the keep.

The brooding keep squats atop the hill, its steep walls covered in ivy, and its towers darkened. It stands empty of all but a few servants and sentries. The walls bear spikes along the top. Impaled on each is a tar-dipped gnoll head; the tar wards off the ubiquitous crows and flies. Graefmotte keep is home to Lord Graef and an abundance of ghosts lingering to torment the immortal ruler. Graef spends his time away from the site of his crime, but he returns once a week to govern, rest, and make preparations for his next foray against the gnolls.

The brooding keep squats atop the hill, its steep walls covered in ivy, and its towers darkened.

Inside the walls is a small bailey. This weed-infested yard contains an old smithy, stable, and granary. The keep is four stories tall, built from stone quarried from the hill on which it stands, and it is a maze of corridors and chambers, each cold, dank, and dreary. Lord Graef's chambers are on the fourth floor, down the hall from the room containing his son's bones.

Adventures in Graefmotte

The manner in which Graefmotte appears in your campaign is up to you, but the corruption and darkness is not so pervasive as to restrict its use to be a simple trap from which the adventurers must escape. You could use it as a point of light in the Shadowfell, albeit a dim one. The adventurers might start here and venture into the surrounding forest in search of escape, glory, or a solution to Graefmotte's problems. Or, Graefmotte might hold some significance to a larger campaign, harboring a clue or useful stepping stone for resolving a far more dangerous plot. What follows are sample concepts you can use as foundations for adventures of your own design.

Home Sweet Home?: Each PC in the group hails from Graefmotte. Born or settling here for awhile, they have all suffered the nightly terrors of stalking ghouls, flesh-eating neighbors, and the capricious executions by a mad lord. Worse, the promise of an impending attack hangs over the community. Having come of age, the adventurers are ready to quit the village or find its salvation if one exists. The deeper the characters dig and the more trouble they stir up, the better the chance that someone will come to silence them and put an end to their brief careers.

An Island in Bleak Sea: After stumbling into one of the Shadowfell's bleakest regions, the adventurers wandered the countryside, searching for a way to escape. They come across a fleeing villager or a small merchant train bound for the village, giving the characters their first taste of what's to come. The villager might beg the PCs to rescue family members still in the village, while the merchants might ask the PCs to bolster their defenses as they travel through woods famed for their gnoll infestation.

On the Trail of Orcus: Having already tangled with an Orcus cult, the PCs follow up one of the leads

they have, and in doing so find themselves stranded in the Shadowfell, not far from Graefmotte. There, the characters can interact with the locals, learn about the ghoul menace, fight the eaters of the dead, and uncover the secrets cultists of Orcus. Once they succeed in defeating the villains, they find Lord Graef less than thankful for their meddling and might find themselves beset by angry villagers and the lord.

Flight from the Mad Lord: While stopping over in Graefmotte on the way to another adventure site, the characters are approached by Sister Regina, who begs them to help her lead a group out of the village. She explains the threat, the rumors about Lord Graef, and the peril they are all in for even being in the village. If the characters agree, Lord Graef intervenes, and hunts the PCs and villagers as they flee through the woods. Slaying the lord just makes him livid. Worse, the PCs must also contend with the gnolls and undead. Even if they make it free from the woods, can they find a place where their charges will be safe?

Final Rest: Drawn by legend, reports of fabulous treasure, or mere happenstance, the adventurers find themselves in Graefmotte. The PCs learn more about Lord Graef and the unruly ghost who torments him. Since Graef spends more and more time outside his castle, the Ghost of Graefmotte and numerous griefmotes descend from the keep to harry the villagers. Each night people die, killed by the haunts or devoured by the eaters of the dead, and the village teeters on the brink of collapse. The adventurers might disown the whole place, trying to escape through the woods, but finding themselves turned back by the gnolls. Or, the PCs might confront the ghosts in the keep and learn the truth about what happened a century ago. If they would free the ghost and Graefmotte from the curse, they must find a way to make Lord Graef admit his crimes and atone for them. The mad lord resisted several attempts before and likely brands the whole party as traitors. Will the PCs make Lord Graef see reason? Or will they have to defeat the lord and force him to admit to his crimes under duress? Will that be enough to lift the curse?

Killing Durven and Escaping Graefmotte

Getting into Graefmotte isn't likely the most difficult part for Shadowfell explorers or adventurers in search of something in Graefmotte. As with all Domains of Dread, getting out is the hard part. And like all dark lords, Durven Graef is a difficult foe to kill. Heroes can escape Graefmotte commonly in one of two ways.

The first is to face and kill Lord Graef. But doing so is more than just a matter of defeating him in combat. Certainly, "killing" Durven Graef will allow someone to pass through the walls of mist that border Graefmotte, but the dark lord's control over his domain is partly what keeps the gnolls of the Ill Wood at bay. These gnolls hunger for revenge against Durven Graef and the village under his protection, and if he killed, they descend on Graefmotte with a vengeance, slaughtering any and all in their path. Killing the dark lord, then, is only the first step in escaping. The second is making it past the horde of ravening gnolls that attack immediately on the dark lord's demise. Even if slain, Lord Graef lies dead for only the remainder of the day. At dawn on the following morning, his body reforms in his bedchamber in Graefmotte Keep.

The only other route is to confront Durven with his sin, and force him to acknowledge his crime in murdering his son. Doing so requires first finding and negotiating with the infamous ghost of Graefmotte—in and of itself not an easy task. The ghost can be found in a number of areas in and around Graefmotte. The PCs must then convince the ghost—likely only after defeating it in combat—to tell them where its bones are now interred, and then compel the restless soul to accompany them there. The bones might be anywhere in the domain, and it's possible the ghost itself only knows how they can be found, but not exactly where they are. The gnolls might have them as trophies, or perhaps one of the townsfolk long ago secreted them away.

Once the body is recovered, the ghost can temporarily infuse its corporeal remains. Only then can Lord Graef be confronted with the horror of his crime. After defeating him in such an instance, rather than dying, he merely crumples the floor and wails out his grief for a full day. The sound of his misery can be heard across the land, and the mists thin, allowing anyone who so desires to depart Graefmotte. In such an instance, the gnolls do not attack, and perhaps acknowledging his misdeed even allows Durven Graef to finally find peace and end his torment—or perhaps the dark powers are not quite done with him yet...

About the Author

Robert J. Schwalb contributed design to such books as the *Forgotten Realms Player's Guide, Draconomicon I: Chromatic Dragons, Manual of the Planes, P2: Demon Queen's Enclave, Martial Power, Player's Handbook 2, Eberron Campaign Guide, Eberron Player's Guide, Divine Power, Adventurer's Vault 2, Draconomicon 2: Metallic Dragons, Primal Power,* as well as numerous articles for D&D Insider. Robert lives in Tennessee.

FORGOTTEN REALMS®

Gontal, Dominions of Nehu

By Bruce R. Cordell
Illustrations by Chuck Lukacs
Cartogragphy by Sean Macdonald

The Glaur Barrens in Gontal is a dangerous area of unmoored earthmotes, rusted iron, changelands, and ruins of a devastated 100-mile-wide Dawn Titan fortress. All that remains of this primordial bastion are scattered metallic ruins, dead pools, and craggy fissures. Some of the fissures open onto tunnels that plunge deep into the earth—remnant passages of the destroyed Dawn Titan fortress. The deeper one descends, the more likely one is to unearth a lump of melted gold or platinum. On the other hand, in the depths you are also likely to find golemlike constructs possessed of a murderous pseudolife.

Called anaxims by druids who've studied their fragments, these creatures appear as conglomerations of iron, gears, shearing blades, and metallic hides jutting with too many cutting implements and rusted surfaces. Whatever the true nature of the Dawn Titan whose exploding fortress created the barrens, it is clear the entity was something of an artificer.

These and other creatures inhabit the core of the ruins. Called the Dominions of Nehu, this central area is a place from where travelers rarely return.

What this fortress must have looked like before its fall beggars the imagination. Forged by a primordial flush in the full flower of its power, ancient stories have it that the citadel's central spire speared the sky itself, while it's deepest shafts pierced the world's fiery heart.

—Larrana Vestel, Gontal guide

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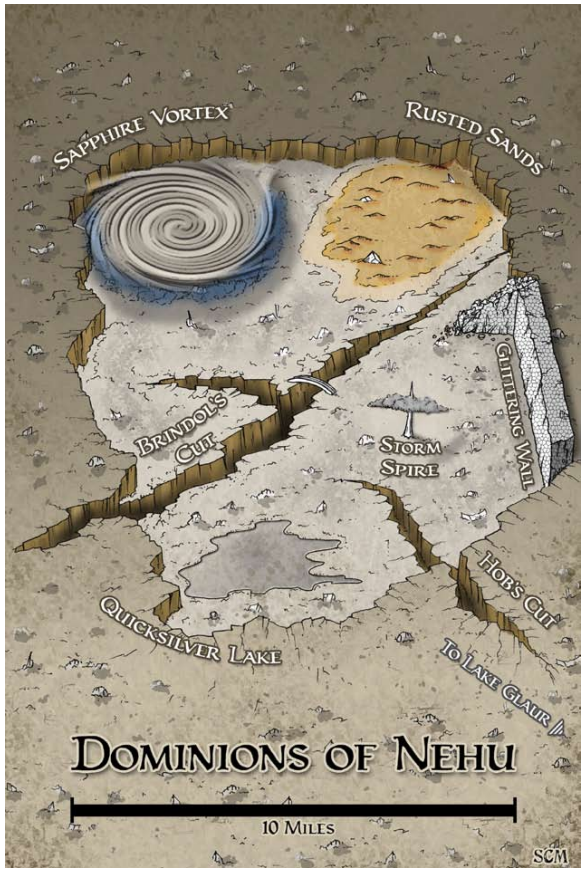
Glaur Barrens Lore

A character knows the following information with a successful Skill Check.

History DC 20: *The Dawn Titans (the primordials) fought the Estelar (gods) and were humbled, but they retained Abeir for their own. Many primordials were slain in the conflict, but others survived within great fortresses. Few among the surviving primordials were prepared for the treachery of their own steeds and companions. When the dragons turned on the Dawn Titans in the War of Fang and Talon, many primordials who survived the divine war were destroyed, including the one whose ruined fortress now lies shattered across northern Gontal west of Lake Glaur.*

History DC 30: *A primordial named Nehushta built and inhabited the now-ruined stronghold that long ago served as one of the central fronts in the Dawn War.*

Nehushta was a massive being of brass, iron, and meteoric adamantine who shined star-white when roused to fury. Nehushta modified its own body with fantastic assemblages of gears, blades, and golemlike improvements; it is no wonder that some of the primordial's servitors and slaves possessed many similar traits.



Dominions of Nehu

The shattered ruins of Nehushta's fortress and the barren lands beyond are not as empty and bleak as many believe. Within the 10-mile-diameter core of the ruined plain roam monsters, plaguechanged creatures, all manner of metallic and oddly shaped anaxims, a dragon or two, and perhaps even some still-functioning hint of Nehushta itself. There are even a few organized groups "living" in the area. These groups and the areas they control are referred to as the Dominions of Nehu.

Few of these so-called dominions enjoy defined boundaries. Many overlap, while others shift back and forth depending on the outcomes of secret wars, assassinations, and unsteady alliances forged between various dominion principals.

Hidden Histories

Gontal and Dusk Ports sages, as well as guides who make knowing things their business, are aware of the Glaur Barrens lore described above. They've also heard tell of or perhaps even seen glimpses of odd, golemlike creatures called anaxims. Even the wisest of these realizes their knowledge of Nehushta and its ruined fortress only scratches the surface. For instance, only a handful of them have heard the barest intimation of the Dominions of Nehu.

Dominion of the Burned

In the southwestern end of Brindol's Cut (a massive fissure that runs the length of the area) lies a dominion of savage genasi. Calling themselves the Burned, these creatures have lived long in secret tribal savagery. They persist despite the murderous anaxims that clank and clatter through miles of unclaimed corridors that honeycomb the entire underlying area.

The Burned are related to other genasi who live in Toril and were slaves to the primordial somewhere back in the ancient days of Nehushta's reign. The Burned know other "tribes" of genasi exist beyond their own buried dominion, but they proclaim theirs is the original strain, created by the artificer Nehushta long ago. Others whisper that theirs is actually a degraded strain, one that has outlived its time by eons and survives only by the grace of a primordial's cast-off relic. After all, the Burned are sterile, unable to replenish their numbers normally. Moreover, they manifest only the firesoul elemental manifestation (though rumors persist that other manifestations were once possible).

The Dominion of the Burned claims a series of ancient chambers exposed along the southern side of the cut about a hundred feet below the surface. Once, the area they claimed was far larger than the few dozen chambers now under their control. An anaxim invasion a decade earlier burst the carefully reinforced stone and iron gates behind which the genasi community had sheltered for centuries. The invading anaxims killed many of the Burned, though some escaped the region and fled southward and eastward to other lands of Returned Abeir.

The survivors who didn't flee banded together behind a fierce genasi named Brindol (for which the fissure was renamed). With a brutality nearly equal to the anaxims, coupled with a tactical and strategic genius the mindless constructs couldn't hope to match, Brindol and his followers withstood the invasion and claimed for themselves a new, albeit smaller dominion. Brindol's followers call him the Lord of the Burned.

The areas claimed by the Burned include four levels of ancient chambers that have been completely repurposed by their genasi tenants. A central cavity lying directly behind main valves that open into the Cut serves as the community's bazaar, gathering area, and when necessary, the Lord of the Burned's court for when his savage justice requires dispensing. Usually, such justice is handed out more as an example to others who might think to cross the cruel genasi than as a punishment that actually fits the crime. When these so called Burned Courts are convened, all else is cleared away and the genasi community assembles on the four mounting levels overlooking the courtyard lit by hundreds of smokeless fires.

Many chambers and corridors lead off the central plaza, some burrowing down to hidden caches of water, others to secret entrances to the surface. At least one well-guarded way leads to Brindol's private chambers, a series of lavishly appointed rooms that house his personal guard and the Birthing Furnace.

Brindol appears as a fiery male genasi armored in an iron carapace of burn-blackened iron. Trophies of Brindol's past victories are bolted to his armor, including a burning genasi skull on one shoulder and the shattered fragments of a yet-glowing magical blade down his chest. Red tattoolike designs curl and spike across the rest of his armored form. He wields a mighty warhammer that sometimes takes light with Brindol's own fire.

Brindol never goes far without his two loyal "hounds." In truth, the hounds are half-tamed anaxims the genasi lord subdued and trained to answer to him and him alone. Their whirring, clanking forms bear a vague resemblance to great dogs but only insofar as they go on four legs. Each creature's metallic mandibles and iron, articulated, spine-throwing tail make it a threat far greater than any mere hound.

The Lord of the Burned is a fierce, unforgiving master. If stories can be believed, he is harsher in his rulership than any of the previous Burned leaders. Those that gainsay Brindol are punished severely. Those who make that mistake a second time are destroyed, either directly, by being released into the Sapphire Vortex left staked down in the center of Rusted Sands, or thrown weaponless and crippled into the northern Cut where anaxims are known to roam. Thus the Dominion of the Burned is a grim society where most fear to step out of line, or indeed, fear making a mistake that could bring down the full fury of the Lord of the Burned upon them. Most who plot against Brindol end up wishing they'd merely fled the dominion.

In the end, the Lord of the Burned holds onto his power over the others of his kind because, in addition to his tactical brilliance and fierce abilities, he also holds the key to the Birthing Furnace, a relic left behind by dead Nehushta. The only hope for continuing the sterile community crawls forth each year from the fiery mouth of the Birthing Forge, but only if the key is present at the proper time. The Birthing Forge is the only reason this splinter population of genasi survives in this forgotten pocket of Abeir. Without it, the Burned would have died out long ago. Rumors persist that the Birthing Furnace actually produces more babes each year than the handful that emerge, but those with manifestations other than firesoul are consumed by the forge's cruel fires before they can crawl forth.

The Dominion of the Burned is aware of the wider world around them through stories and collected tomes, though few have direct experience with it.

Dominion of the Burned Encounters

The Lord of the Burned and his two "hounds" work well together and form the core of an even larger war force that usually also includes two or three other genasi, including a skirmisher and one artillery.

Generally speaking, creatures that blunder into the miles-long cut in the particular location where Dominion of the Burned resides first encounter patrols of standard genasi:

Level 4 Encounter (XP 940)
- ✦ 1 genasi captain (level 6 soldier)
- ✦ 3 genasi soldiers (level 4 soldier)
- ✦ 1 genasi artillerist (level 4 artillery)

Brindol, Genasi	**Level 10 Elite Soldier (Leader)**
Medium elemental humanoid	XP 1,000
Initiative +10	**Senses** Perception +7
Aura of Command aura 10; allies in the aura gain a +1 power bonus to attack rolls; Brindol gains the same bonus if any allies remain within the aura.	
HP 216; **Bloodied** 108	
AC 26; **Fortitude** 24, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 22	
Saving Throws +2	
Speed 6	
Action Points 1	
⊕ **Warhammer** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+17 vs. AC; 1d10 + 8 damage, and the target is marked until the end of Brindol's next turn.	
⸸ **Double Attack** (standard; at-will)	
Brindol makes two warhammer attacks. If both attacks hit a single target, Brindol recharges his fire hammer attack.	
⸸ **Fire Hammer** (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃) ✦ **Fire, Weapon**	
+17 vs. AC; 2d10 + 3 damage, and ongoing 5 fire damage. Target is marked until the end of Brindol's next turn.	
⸸ **Fiery Retort** (immediate reaction, when struck in combat; encounter) ✦ **Fire**	
The enemy takes ongoing 5 fire damage (save ends).	
Alignment Evil	**Languages** Primordial
Skills Endurance +15, Intimidate +14	
Str 20 (+11)	**Dex** 14 (+8) **Wis** 12 (+7)
Con 20 (+10)	**Int** 10 (+6) **Cha** 16 (+9)
Equipment plate armor, warhammer	

Anaxim Hound	**Level 9 Brute**
Large elemental animate (construct)	XP 400
Initiative +7 **Senses** **Perception** +9; darkvision	
HP 120; **Bloodied** 60	
AC 21; **Fortitude** 22, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 20	
Resist 15 lightning	
Speed 8	
⊕ **Bite** (standard; at-will)	
+12 vs. AC; 2d6 + 5 damage.	
⸸ **Burst of Spines** (minor; at-will) ✦ **Lightning**	
Close burst 5; targets enemies; +10 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 5 lightning damage.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 21 (+9)	**Dex** 17 (+7) **Wis** 5 (+1)
Con 20 (+9)	**Int** 5 (+1) **Cha** 16 (+7)

Dominion of the Mindless

Clanking, clacking, iron-thewed creatures that buzz with residual might of the thunderstorm are sometimes encountered on the inhospitable Glaur Barrens. The possibility of encountering one or more of these mindless constructs, called anaxims (though the guide Larrana Vestal also calls them sheens), makes overland travel dangerous. In truth, civilization is essentially nonexistent in northern Gontal. Moreover, there is nothing a traveler in southern Gontal is likely to want farther north or east of the Glaur Barrens.

Beyond Gontal's mountainous northeastern border, Melabrauth is a vast, wild jungle filled with the ruins of a dragon empire. The old dragon overlord, Melauthaur, is rumored to yet overfly its ruined empire, searching for something of great value.

Northern Gontal itself is nearly devoid of humanoid settlements, though a few fishing villages cluster along the western coast. Natives of these settlements have learned that it is better to travel by sea to reach Szant or the Dusk Ports than to risk overland trips.

Those who disdain the advice of guides soon discover for themselves the real threat of lurking, metallic hunters. The odds of running across one of these creatures improve within the hundred-mile-wide scar that houses the foundations of the Nehushta's ancient fortress and are most extreme within the roughly 10-mile-diameter core of the ruins (the Dominions of Nehu).

The true nexus of anaxim activity, however, lies somewhere deep beneath the Storm Spire. This milk-white spire, nearly a thousand feet wide at its base, reaches skyward, but its absolute height remains always obscured by a lightning-lit thundercloud that forever hangs overhead.

This massive edifice is one of the few portions of the original fortress that survives to the present. Composed of white opaque crystal capable of magical self-repair, the spire draws atmospheric turbulence. It is a supernatural lightning rod of primordial proportions. However, if there was ever any intelligence and purpose behind the sea of energy gathered every hour from the hovering thunderstorm and channeled into the earth, that purpose has been lost to time. Now, that energy discharges into the earth and radiates out and down for several miles.

Something in the Storm Spire's makeup leaves its mark on the lightning it draws and channels downward. Instead of simply going to ground and dissipating to nothing, the captured lightning flows through rude matter and transforms it. From the compacted layers of collapsed levels of Nehushta's fortress, stone, mineral, and iron stirs to the beck of the lightning's call. Anaxims dig forth and emerge into clear tunnels. They are vicious, mindless, animal-like constructs without purpose or instruction. No hour goes by that new anaxims are not energized and called from the sedimentary ruins, nor does an hour pass that some number of these vicious constructs do not fall into their component parts once more, victims of the undiscerning blades, saws, and metallic fury of stronger siblings.

While no two anaxims are exactly alike, these creatures can be classified in broad types. There are many such types, ranging from tiny swarms of bronze crawlers, to many-footed scavengers that race across the sands, to a few lone, massive behemoths lumbering across the earth. Most are dangerous even to themselves, because the majority lack even an animal's instincts. The ones that survive more than a few months seem to learn some residual cunning, which makes them all the more dangerous when encountered.

A few unique anaxims have survived so long that Burned tribesfolk and members of the Dominion of Bones have stories regarding their appearance stretching back hundreds of years. These particular anaxims may actually possess intelligence, but they remain as dangerous as any other construct if crossed.

The most famous anaxim is the Iron Worm. It appears as a gargantuan, lumbering creature with the form of an articulated metal worm that stretches well over a hundred feet in length. Its metallic scales are rusted and worn but are several feet thick at least. They constantly spark with small lightning discharges. It doesn't seem to possess eyes, ears, a nose, a mouth, or any other method to interact with and sense the world. This doesn't stop its uncanny movements, which might be a swift side-winding motion on the surface like a snake or a burrowing, straight plunge through the earth that parts before it like sand. Stories suggest that the Iron Worm may possess an ability to communicate mind to mind with those it deems worthy, though no one in this generation is known to have been granted that distinction. The Iron Worm crushes any creature that attempts to block its movement or that attacks it, even other anaxim. Otherwise, the creature seems essentially innocuous, if enigmatic.

Anaxim Mauler **Level 11 Elite Brute**
Large elemental animate (construct) XP 1,200
Initiative +7 **Senses** **Perception** +8, darkvision
HP 280; **Bloodied** 140
AC 23; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 22
Resist 15 lightning
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6
Action Points 1
⊕ **Mandible** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Lightning**
Reach 2; +14 vs. AC; 2d10 + 1 damage plus 5 lightning damage.
⸸ **Mandible Grasp** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Lightning**
The mauler makes two mandible attacks. If both mandible attacks hit the same target, the mauler makes a secondary attack against the target. *Secondary Attack:* +14 vs. AC; the target is grabbed (until escape).
⸸ **Mauling Chew** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Lightning**
The mauler deals 2d10 + 3 damage and ongoing 5 lightning damage to a grabbed creature (no attack roll required).
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** –
Str 23 (+11) **Dex** 15 (+7) **Wis** 17 (+8)
Con 20 (+10) **Int** 2 (+1) **Cha** 16 (+8)

Anaxim Training

Some anaxims are amenable to capture. With proper training, they can be partially domesticated for use as coursers, guards, and hunting companions, but only temporarily. Only a few Burned and undead of the Dominion of Bones have managed this feat, and those that do must always be prepared for the anaxim to revert to its natural, savage state. Natives of the Glaur Barrens know such techniques (see the Imprint Anaxim ritual) to train an anaxim.

Anaxim Spark Lasher	Level 10 Artillery
Medium elemental animate (construct)	XP 500
Initiative +9	**Senses** Perception +12; darkvision
HP 86; **Bloodied** 43	
AC 23; **Fortitude** 25, **Reflex** 23, **Will** 21	
Resist 15 lightning	
Speed 6, fly 3	
⊕ **Discharge** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Lightning**	
+15 vs. Reflex; 1d10 + 8 lightning damage.	
Lightning Lash (standard; at-will) ✦ **Lightning**	
Ranged 10; +15 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 8 lightning damage.	
Storm Pulse (standard; recharge ⚅) ✦ **Lightning**	
Close blast 5; +13 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 8 lightning damage, and the target is weakened (save ends).	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** –
Str 19 (+9)	**Dex** 19 (+9) **Wis** 15 (+7)
Con 20 (+10)	**Int** 7 (+3) **Cha** 10 (+5)

The most *in*famous anaxim who's shown staying power over the decades is called Mother Mauler. Mother Mauler is a squat, squarish, metallic creature the size of a large shack. Its mouth is cavernous and stretches across its front, and is a cavity filled with whirring blades. Metallic mandibles reach from each side of its body and serve it as arms, capable of reaching prey and pulling them into its lethal mouth cavity. Mother Mauler supports itself on massive, metallic legs with splayed feet ideal for finding purchase even in sand.

Smaller versions of Mother Mauler hunt the Glaur Barrens. Called maulers, these are not nearly as dangerous singly as their eponymous model, but being attacked by two or three maulers is considered a death sentence.

Other anaxim threats include "hounds," swarms of various tiny anaxims, and spark lashers. Spark lashers are slender, wasplike creatures of metal and crystal snapping with barely restrained lightning.

Dominion of the Mindless Encounters

Lone anaxims can sometimes be seen in the distance or be surprised in some hollow on the surface or dark tunnel below ground. Only those that have learned to work together usually actively hunt other creatures (and anaxims).

Level 10 Encounter (XP 2,500)
✦ 1 anaxim mauler (level 11 elite brute)
✦ 1 anaxim spark lasher (level 10 artillery)
✦ 2 anaxim hounds (level 9 brute)

Dominion of Bone

An expedition three hundred strong led by Prince Nathur (a great uncle of the current ruler of Gontal, Queen Imreera Hethkantan) left Szant some 95 years ago. It marched north into the Glaur Barrens, intent on prying great treasures from the ruined plain containing a Dawn Titan's fallen citadel. Prince Nathur and his expedition were never heard from again.

As most back in Szant suspected at the time, the expedition was slaughtered to the last camp follower and steed. That disaster, however, was not visited upon the expedition immediately as popular myths have it. In fact, Nathur set up a camp in a section of surface ruins about three miles northwest of Brindol's Cut. These ruins proved to be especially rich in bits of gold, platinum, and other valuable minerals. To help transport these riches to the south, Prince Nathur's expedition founded the trading town of Rimlost on Lake Glaur to the southeast.

Though few realized it then or now, the name Rimlost was intentionally chosen to mimic that of a high tower on Frimbrul's northern cliffs where Primordials are secretly revered; Nathur himself was a devotee of one the banned cults. Despite the merchant face put on the expedition, Nathur's true, secret desire for the exploratory force was to find a relic of Nehushta and revive it, or at least enshrine it.

Everything was altered, however, when the Blue Breath of Change came. The portion of the ruined fortress where the expedition was encamped was particularly thick with magic. More unfortunately for the explorers, an arm of the change storm flew directly across them. The resulting conflagration burned many of the expeditioneers to nothingness and killed many more. A few were killed and reanimated simultaneously. Of these, one was plaguechanged.

When Prince Nathur's senses returned, things were not as they had been. Nathur viewed the world through multiple, fused skulls. His body had become an amalgam of skeletons twisted and fused together to create a shape not unlike a winged dragon but composed of the compacted bones and corpses of perhaps a hundred former courtiers, guards, and servants.

Nathur was a prince still, but a prince of bone and death consigned to haunt the ruins of the ancient fortress of Nehushta. His breath had become an exhalation of shadow and blue fire, and its presence sapped life from living creatures. With the memories of the bodies making up his form pouring into his consciousness and the shock of his new form becoming more and more apparent, Nathur went insane.

Today, the Prince of Bone rules a dominion within the ruins of the fortress, rooted in a plagueland dominated by the Sapphire Vortex. The Prince of Bone's subjects include a few remnants of his original expedition that were not incorporated into his form, but most are generations of dead genasi who belonged to the Dominion of the Burned while they drew breath.

The Prince of Bone himself cannot stray farther than about two miles from the edges of the Sapphire Vortex. Some part of his plaguechanged, undead "physiology" begins to unravel when he tries to go farther. Thus, despite the Prince of Bone's great power, his strength is restricted. He can and does send undead servants to all parts of the razed fortress and beyond to work his will. Despite his new, monstrous shape and broken mind, the creature remembers something of Nathur and Nathur's obsession with finding and artifact of Nehushta to revive or revere. Where Prince Nathur's followers once combed the ruins for bits of mineral and crystal they could sell for profit, now they ceaselessly search for remnants and hints of Nehushta, leaving behind treasures in favor of primordial relics.

The Prince of Bone is rarely seen by creatures of other dominions or the much rarer visitor from outside the fortress ruins. Native creatures, even the Mindless, are rarely foolish enough to enter a swirling vortex of a plagueland known to be stalked by a flying undead plaguechanged amalgam. Visitors unaware of all the other particulars are put off by the aspect of the Sapphire Vortex itself, which rises at least as high into the sky as the Storm Spire.

Those who enter the plagueland of the Sapphire Vortex face the same dangers described for plaguelands in the Forgotten Realms® *Campaign Guide*. Those seeking spellscars and who survive the emersion, however, discover powers unique to this location, including *death vortex*.

Death Vortex **Spellscarred Attack 9**

Your flesh bursts into ebony-tipped blue flame, burning away your outer layer of skin as the flame expands to encompass nearby creatures in a miniature sapphire vortex.

Encounter ✦ Arcane, Necrotic
Standard Action **Close** burst 2
Target: Each creature in burst
Attack: Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma vs. Reflex
Hit: 3d8 + Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma modifier necrotic damage.
Miss: Half damage
Sustain Minor: You can spend a healing surge to repeat the attack against all foes you previously hit (even if no longer in range, although still within line of sight) when you sustain the power. On a hit, the attack instead deals 1d8 necrotic damage and you can slide the target 2 squares.

Because the Prince of Bone is constrained to the northwest corner of the ruined fortress, Nathur has recruited a pair of powerful and dependable undead to serve as his eyes, ears, and even mouth. One of those is a skull lord (*Monster Manual*, page. 236) named Teshaurus. Teshaurus is always accompanied by two zombie hulks and two vampire lords.

Teshaurus sometimes treats diplomatically with Brindol of the Burned. It quickly locates visitors/looters to the site and deals with them as seems most appropriate. If visitors to the fortress appear particularly interesting, Teshaurus invites them to meet the Prince of Bone, who enjoys novelty as a man lost in

Imprint Anaxim Ritual

You impress upon the helpless anaxim before you its immanent destruction unless it serves you. It rises, ready to unleash its mindless fury when you next require its aid. You know that you only have a relatively short window before the creature reverts to a mindless threat.

Level: 10 **Component Cost:** 400 gp
Category: Exploration **Market Price:** 1,000 gp
Time: 10 minutes **Key Skill:** Intimidation
Duration: Special

You target a dazed, stunned, or helpless Large or smaller anaxim whose level is less than your own. The anaxim must remain within 5 squares of you for the time necessary to perform the ritual. Once the ritual is complete, the anaxim follows you, avoiding direct danger and refusing to follow instructions other than the one: attack a group of foes.

Upon receiving this verbal instruction, combat begins. The anaxim fights until the foes you indicate are destroyed or until it is destroyed. The anaxim uses basic attacks each round except on rounds when you expend a minor action to urge it to use one of its other attacks.

When the combat ends or the ritual's duration ends, your influence ends and the anaxim reverts to its natural behavior; it simply leaves unless you attack it.

Your Intimidation check determines how long the anaxim is affected by the ritual and follows you around as it waits to be activated for combat.

Intimidation Check Result	Duration
19 or lower	6 hours
20–29	12 hours
30–39	18 hours
40 or higher	24 hours

the desert enjoys water. Of course, once the novelty of visitors wears off, the Prince of Bone kills and animates them into more servitors or incorporates their lifeless bodies into his own amalgamated, dragon-shaped form.

Geography of Nehu

The blasted ruin of the primordial's fortress contains several regions and ruined areas of particular note.

Glittering Wall

This portion of the ancient fortress withstood the initial attack that destroyed the citadel and the subsequent, eroding ages better than most other parts of the structure. Today it stands like a many-faceted mirror several hundred feet high and nearly a mile thick. Those who approach too near when the sun is at the right angle in the sky are blinded by the many-faceted glare.

This nearly-intact portion of wall forms a vast structure in a modern era that has nearly forgotten Dawn Titans. It contains many hollowed halls appropriate for giants. Now these great chambers are a warren for rats, undead, and monsters of all kinds (including anaxims). Strange, wailing cries sometimes race through the corridors as a mournful wind.

Though he's never visited the hollows within the Glittering Wall, the Prince of Bone is convinced, based on reports from its servitors, that the sound is a remnant of Nehushta itself.

Rusted Sands

These lethal sands are the color of dried blood. Each night, winds sculpt the sands into new, elaborate processions of high dunes, so that they are different every day. Those of the dominions rarely visit here. Those who do (and return) describe becoming deliriously lost and finding the borders only by purest chance. An unknown force at the center of the sands draws things in and doesn't let them go.

Brindol's Cut

A miles-long fissure divides the ruined fortress's core. The sheer canyon walls open onto many tunnels and corridors that were once buried basements of Nehushta's stronghold. Most of these extend only a short distance before guttering out at the face of a cave. Some wend their way to strange chambers that have remained sealed since before the citadel's fall. The deepest portion of the fissure remains unplumbed.

The southwestern portion of this fissure houses what remains of the Dominion of the Burned.

Quicksilver Lake

The fluid of this silvery lake is languid and heavy. It has a silvery opalescence that is nearly opaque. Though not immediately poisonous, some quality of the water drives sentient creatures into deeper and deeper depression until finally they give up on life. Some have suggested that the lake is a remnant of a Nehushta's tears, when it wept at the treachery of dragons.

Hob's Cut

A smaller fissure extends out of the fortress core to the southeast. Like the larger Brindol's Cut, the fissure provides access to several corridors and tunnels.

Unlike the larger canyon, storms of yellow-green radiance sometimes come ravening forth at night from an unidentified, deeper cavity. Made up of thousands of tiny firefly-like insects, these swarms descend on anything nearby and feed on it. Those who survive this pestilence sometimes come down with a wasting disease called glow fever. As the disease progresses, sufferers take on a sickening bioluminescence reminiscent of the swarming creatures. When a victim finally succumbs, the body quickly breaks down into another swarm, which lifts off to seek its fellows in Hob's Cut.

Storm Spire

This milk-white spire reaches into a perpetually boiling, lightning-lit thundercloud that hangs overhead. The Storm Spire is somehow intimately connected to the propagation of the anaxims.

Sapphire Vortex

A plagueland dominated by a fiery blue vortex that spins ceaselessly overhead.

About the Author

Bruce Cordell is a D&D designer, but during his twelve years in the game industry, he has dabbled in miniatures, board games, collectible card games, d20 games, and more. Bruce has over sixty listed credits to his name, including the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*™, *Open Grave: Secrets of the Undead*™, and the new Forgotten Realms *Campaign Guide*. His body of work also includes five published Forgotten Realms novels (including *Darkvision*, *Stardeep*, and *Plague of Spells*), with more on the way.

Hybrid Characters

A young apprentice wizard is forced into the military when her hometown is sacked by orcs. After leading a squadron in the baron's army for three months to drive back the invading horde, she retires from military service to enter an adventuring career as a warlord/wizard.

A lone barbarian from the far north travels to the gleaming cities of the south, where a local thieves' guild recruits him as hired muscle. Along the way, he picks up several tricks of cunning and wit, all the better to defeat those who think him nothing more than a savage. When he later becomes an adventurer, this barbarian/rogue relies both on his talents as a burglar as well as his ability to unleash the raging beast that still lurks within his heart.

The hybrid character rules allow you to combine elements of two character classes into a whole. Effectively, you create a brand-new class from portions of two classes. These rules are experimental and are presented here for playtesting.

Like the multiclass feats introduced in the *Player's Handbook*®, these rules let you reflect a more varied array of character abilities than traditional classes do. Whether you're doing this to reflect your character's elaborate backstory, to combine different mechanical elements to create a potent new combination, or to fill out a party that needs just a little something extra, the end result is the same: Your hybrid character gives up depth of ability in exchange for greater flexibility.

How Does It Work?

The hybrid character rules break down each class into parts. The hybrid version of a class provides a portion of the game benefits of the normal class (hit points, defenses, proficiencies, class features, and so forth). When combined with the hybrid version of another class, these two partial classes create a whole, functional class.

In practice, it's not quite as simple as that. Because character classes aren't designed to be broken down and recombined in this way, not every hybrid is equally effective. Mixing roles, key ability scores, types of attacks, or other significant elements can result in a noticeable range of efficacy.

For that reason, this section provides advice on how to build an effective hybrid character. You can ignore this advice in order to create a hybrid that fits your mental image of your character precisely, but that character might prove less effective than your nonhybrid allies.

Hybrids and Roles

When you combine two classes of the same role (such as fighter and paladin), you can expect to be about as effective in filling that role as a single-class character of the same role.

Combining two classes of different roles, however, creates a character who can operate reasonably well in two different roles in certain situations, but can't fill either role through an entire encounter. A cleric/rogue, for example, might be able to heal half as often as a normal leader and dish out striker-level damage with some attacks.

Party Building

When adding a hybrid character to an adventuring party, it's best if at least one (if not both) of the roles normally filled by your two classes are also filled by another character in the party. For example, your cleric/rogue won't feel quite as lacking in healing or damage output if you also have a warlord and a ranger in the party. This means that a hybrid character makes a great fifth or sixth member of a party, since the key roles are likely covered by your allies.

A hybrid character can also be a great way to deal with a smaller-than-normal party. If you have only two or three characters in your party, having one or two hybrid characters in the group can help you cover the missing roles. Your party won't fill the roles as completely as a full-sized party would, but half a leader is usually better than no leader at all!

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CREATING A HYBRID CHARACTER

If you want to make a hybrid character, pick the two classes that you want to combine, and then read the entries for the hybrid versions of them. This preview provides hybrid versions of the classes in the *Player's Handbook* as well as the swordmage. The rest of this section details how to combine the elements in the two hybrid classes.

Armor Proficiencies: You gain only the armor proficiencies that are possessed by both of your classes. For example, a fighter/rogue would gain proficiency with cloth armor and leather armor only.

Weapon Proficiencies: Combine the weapon proficiencies given for each of your classes. For example, a cleric/rogue gains proficiency with simple melee weapons, simple ranged weapons, shuriken, and short swords.

Implements: You can wield the implements of both classes, and you can use implement powers from either class (and from those classes' paragon paths) through the implements of either class. For example, a cleric/warlock can use implement powers from either class through holy symbols, rods, and wands.

Bonus to Defense: You gain the bonuses to defenses noted in both hybrid class entries. Bonuses to the same defense add together. Some hybrid class entries give you a choice of which defense to apply a bonus to.

Hit Points at 1st Level: To determine your hit points at 1st level, add together the hit points at 1st level noted in both hybrid class entries, and round fractions down. Then add your Constitution score to the result.

Hit Points per Level Gained: To determine the hit points you gain at each new level, add together the values noted in each of your hybrid class entries, and round fractions down. For example, a hybrid cleric/fighter gains 5 hit points at each new level (2.5 for cleric + 3 for fighter, rounded down).

Healing Surges per Day: Add together the healing surges per day noted in both hybrid class entries, and round fractions down. Then add your Constitution modifier to the result.

SUPPORT FOR HYBRID CHARACTERS

We understand that many players are eager to test out the new hybrid character rules. We appreciate that enthusiasm, and we look forward to your playtest feedback, which will help us improve these rules.

However, since these rules are experimental and likely to undergo significant changes before they are published in final form, we've made two decisions regarding the type of official support that we'll provide for this content, decisions different from what we normally do for *D&D Insider*™ playtest content.

✦ Hybrid characters are not allowed in RPGA sanctioned events at this time.

✦ The *D&D Insider* Compendium and D&D Character Builder will not support hybrid characters at this time.

We expect that the final version of the hybrid character rules will be legal for RPGA sanctioned events and also supported in the D&D Compendium and the D&D Character Builder. When the final version is published, we'll let you know about the change in status. Thanks for your understanding!

—R&D and Organized Play

Class Skills: To create your list of class skills, combine the class skills noted for the two hybrid classes.

Trained Skills: You gain three trained skills, chosen from your list of class skills. Some hybrid class entries grant extra trained skills, which must be taken from that class's skill list, not from the combined list.

Class Features: You gain all the class features in both hybrid class entries.

If a class feature has the word "hybrid" in parentheses after its name, it is a modified version of the class feature but still counts as that class feature for the purpose of meeting prerequisites.

Powers: You gain one 1st-level at-will attack power from each class. You can choose your 1st-level encounter attack power and 1st-level daily attack power from either class.

When you reach a new level and gain an encounter attack power, a daily attack power, or a utility power, you can choose that power from either class. However, if you have at least two powers from the same category (at-will attack, encounter attack, daily attack, and utility), at least one of those powers must come from each of your hybrid classes. Even if you later retrain one or more of your powers (or swap out a power thanks to a multiclass feat or other special option), you must always have at least one power in each of those four categories from each of your classes.

Example: Bergen, a 1st-level fighter/rogue, wants a mixture of powers from his two classes. He selects *cleave* (fighter) and *deft strike* (rogue) as his at-will attack powers. He then selects *steel serpent strike* (fighter) as his 1st-level encounter attack power and *blinding barrage* (rogue) as his 1st-level daily attack power.

When Bergen reaches 3rd level and gains another encounter attack power, he must select the new power from the rogue class, since he already has a fighter encounter attack power. Alternatively, he could use retraining to replace *steel serpent strike* with *king's castle*, a 1st-level rogue encounter attack power, and then choose a 3rd-level fighter encounter attack power.

When Bergen reaches 7th level, he can choose his new encounter attack power from either the fighter class or the rogue class, since he already has one encounter attack power from each.

ASSIGNING ABILITY SCORES

When combining two classes to build your hybrid character, try to choose classes with complementary key abilities, secondary abilities, or both. This helps your character remain effective.

For example, fighters and paladins share a key ability: Strength. This means a fighter/paladin hybrid character can select and use attack powers from both classes easily. The two classes also share a secondary ability: Wisdom. If the hybrid character has a high Wisdom score, he or she can benefit from various Wisdom-based options available to both classes, such as the paladin's *radiant smite* power and the fighter's Combat Superiority class feature.

If you choose two classes with different key abilities, make sure that both of the ability scores are high enough that you can use your powers and class features effectively. For instance, a fighter/rogue needs a good Dexterity score (to use rogue attack powers) and also a good Strength score (to use fighter powers).

When playing a hybrid character, it becomes even more important to use your racial ability score bonuses to their best effect. You'll get the most value if you match your two classes' key abilities to a set of racial ability score bonuses (such as a half-orc fighter/rogue).

Something to consider when assigning ability scores: If you select two classes whose key abilities are in the same defense pair (such as Dexterity and Intelligence), one or two of your defenses are likely to be lower than normal. This disadvantage can be overcome through the careful selection of feats and magic items, or you can play it up as a character quirk.

Here are some good ability score arrays to use when creating a hybrid character:

18 14 11 10 10 8

If your key abilities match, you can probably get away with this top-heavy ability score array, though you're probably sacrificing benefits derived from secondary abilities. A swordmage/wizard using this array would likely place the 18 in Intelligence and the 14 in whichever secondary ability mattered most.

16 16 12 11 10 8

This array works well for hybrid characters who have two key abilities, particularly if those overlap with secondary abilities. A fighter/swordmage might like this array, putting one 16 in Strength and the other in Intelligence.

16 14 14 13 10 8

This array is good for hybrid characters who want attack powers drawing on three or more abilities, such as a rogue/warlock who wants to select attack powers based on Dexterity, Constitution, and Charisma. A downside of this array is that your overall accuracy will suffer because of your lower ability scores.

Special Rules for Hybrid Characters

Hybrid characters interact with some game rules in unusual ways. Use these guidelines to help you sort out any complexities.

Meeting Prerequisites

A hybrid character is considered a member of both classes (and both roles of those classes). A fighter/wizard can take feats and paragon paths, for example, that have the fighter or the wizard class (or the defender or the controller role) as a prerequisite.

As noted in some hybrid class entries, a hybrid character receives a modified—a hybrid—version of a class feature. Such a class feature counts as the full-fledged feature for the purpose of meeting prerequisites and applying various game options (unless the hybrid class feature can't apply as a result of being different from the full-fledged feature).

Multiclass Feats

If you create a hybrid character, you can still select multiclass feats. The rules for multiclassing still apply: You can't take multiclass feats for a class you already belong to, which includes both of your classes.

Paragon Hybrids

Rather than take a paragon path at 11th level, a hybrid character can choose to gain more powers from his or her classes. If you choose this option, you gain several benefits.

At 11th level, you gain the Hybrid Talent feat, even if you already have it.

In place of the paragon path encounter power gained at 11th level, you can select any encounter power of 7th level or lower from either of your hybrid classes.

In place of the paragon path utility power gained at 12th level, you can select any utility power of 10th level or lower from either of your hybrid classes.

In place of the paragon path daily power gained at 20th level, you can select any daily power of 19th level or lower from either of your hybrid classes.

New Feat: Hybrid Talent

Prerequisite: Hybrid character

Benefit: You gain a hybrid talent option from one of your hybrid class entries. You can't choose an option that you already have.

Retraining

You cannot use retraining to replace one of your hybrid classes with a different hybrid class. You cannot, for example, use retraining to change from cleric/fighter to fighter/paladin.

Hybrids: Proceed with Care

The system of classes and roles in the D&D® game is designed to ensure that every character has a clear purpose at the table and that no character can easily become marginalized by poor choices made in character creation.

The hybrid character system discards many of the safeguards built into the normal class system. Even though every effort has been made to craft a system that creates hybrid characters that are as robust and useful as their single-class comrades, the sheer number of combinations available—a number that will only grow as more classes are published—ensures that some combinations might feel underpowered or ineffective. This is particularly true if your hybrid character is the only one fulfilling one (or both) of the roles normally filled by the classes you choose.

If you find that your hybrid character isn't as effective as you had hoped, work with your DM to find a solution. You might choose to combine a different pair of classes, to use the multiclass system, or to change to a nonhybrid character.

Racial Traits

Some races grant benefits based on a class. As long as you remember that you are treated as a member of both your classes, these benefits should be easy to adjudicate. Here are two examples.

Dilettante (Half-Elf): You can't choose the 1st-level at-will attack power from either of your classes.

Bonus At-Will Attack Power (Human): You choose the extra 1st-level at-will attack power from either of your classes.

Hybrid vs. Multiclass

Both the hybrid character system and the multiclass system allow a character to select powers and class features from multiple classes. However, these two systems offer different advantages and disadvantages, which help make both choices interesting.

- A multiclass character doesn't give up any class features. However, he or she must spend precious feats to dabble in a second class, whereas a hybrid character doesn't need to spend any feats to do so.
- A hybrid character can begin play with a more varied array of class features and powers than can a multiclass character.
- A hybrid character whose classes have different roles is capable of temporarily but effectively stepping into either roles, but can't replace a nonhybrid character of either of them. A multiclass character fills one role entirely—the role of his or her main class—and can occasionally fill another role, but not as well as a hybrid character can.

Ultimately, the hybrid character system more effectively describes a character who has an unusual backstory than the multiclass system does. A hybrid character can begin his or her adventuring career having already mixed two very different classes. In contrast, a multiclass character starts out concentrated on a single class and slowly expands into another class.

It's up to you to decide which of these two systems better describes the unique mixture of class features, powers, and backstory that you believe best expresses your character.

Trading Class Features

A hybrid character can't trade class features for other features, even if the rules would normally allow it.

HYBRID AVENGER

You blend secret monastic training with other talents to become a unique servant of the gods. Do your vows represent an earlier stage of your life, all but left behind, or a newfound mission?

As a hybrid avenger, you pursue your foes with great skill, but you must sacrifice some of your offensive and defensive capabilities to dabble in a second class.

HYBRID CLASS TRAITS
Role: Striker
Power Source: Divine
Key Ability: Wisdom
Secondary Abilities: Dexterity, Intelligence

Armor Proficiencies: Cloth
Weapon Proficiencies: Simple melee, military melee, simple ranged
Implements: Holy symbols
Bonus to Defense: +1 Fortitude, Reflex, or Will

Hit Points at 1st Level: 7
Hit Points per Level Gained: 3
Healing Surges per Day: 3.5

Class Skills: Acrobatics (Dex), Athletics (Str), Endurance (Con), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Perception (Wis), Religion (Int), Stealth (Dex), Streetwise (Cha)

Class Features: Oath of enmity (hybrid)
Hybrid Talent Options: Armor of Faith, Avenger's Censure (hybrid), Channel Divinity (hybrid)

Oath of Enmity (Hybrid)

You gain the avenger power *oath of enmity* (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 33). The power functions as normal, except that you can apply the effect only when you make a melee attack with an avenger power or an avenger paragon path power.

Hybrid Talent Options

If you take the Hybrid Talent feat, you can select one of the following options.

Armor of Faith

This class feature functions exactly as the avenger class feature (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 33).

Avenger's Censure (Hybrid)

This class feature functions as the avenger class feature (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 33), except that the bonus to damage rolls applies only to your avenger powers and avenger paragon path powers.

Channel Divinity (Hybrid)

This class feature functions as the avenger class feature (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 33), except that you start with a single avenger Channel Divinity power of your choice.

Good Hybrid Combinations

The avenger/invoker enjoys a variety of melee and nonmelee attacks, all based on Wisdom. You can control enemies at a distance, making it even easier for you to hunt down your prey.

An avenger/rogue needs two good ability scores (Wisdom and Dexterity), but having two striker hybrid classes means you're particularly deadly to your enemies.

HYBRID BARBARIAN

In your heart, you know the power of rage. However, your link to the primal spirits that unleash these rages isn't quite as strong as a typical barbarian's. Perhaps you've been away from the tribe for too long, or maybe you have only begun to harness primal power.

Regardless of the reason, as a hybrid barbarian you can't unleash the burning rage in your heart quite as easily as a full member of that class, but you remain capable of occasional frenzied bursts of energy.

HYBRID CLASS TRAITS
Role: Striker
Power Source: Primal
Key Ability: Strength
Secondary Abilities: Constitution, Charisma

Armor Proficiencies: Cloth, leather, hide
Weapon Proficiencies: Simple melee, military melee
Bonus to Defense: +1 Fortitude

Hit Points at 1st Level: 7.5
Hit Points per Level Gained: 3
Healing Surges per Day: 4

Class Skills: Acrobatics (Dex), Athletics (Str), Endurance (Con), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Nature (Wis), Perception (Wis)

Class Features: Rampage
Hybrid Talent Options: Barbarian Armored Agility, Feral Might

Rampage

This class feature functions exactly as the barbarian class feature (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 49).

Hybrid Talent Options

If you take the Hybrid Talent feat, you can select one of the following options.

Barbarian Armored Agility

You gain the Barbarian Agility class feature (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 49). You also gain proficiency with leather armor and hide armor.

Feral Might

This class feature functions exactly as the barbarian class feature (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 49).

Good Hybrid Combinations

The hybrid barbarian can be joined with the hybrid fighter for great durability and melee prowess. Choose a Hybrid Talent option to improve your AC, either Barbarian Armored Agility or Fighter Armor Proficiency.

Adding powers from the battle cleric build to your hybrid barbarian gives you valuable healing capability, which you might use to keep yourself fighting.

A barbarian/ranger is a potent combatant. Such a character can use barbarian powers requiring a two-handed weapon as well as ranger powers requiring two melee weapons.

BARD

You are a dabbler among dabblers. The versatility of the typical bard isn't enough for you, so you have branched out even further into other talents. Alternatively, you might have been incapable of mastering the bard's full repertoire of performance and inspiration and have chosen to explore other areas to augment your abilities.

As a hybrid bard, you retain some of the bard's healing power, but trade away much of that class's innate versatility in exchange for access to another class's tricks.

HYBRID CLASS TRAITS
Role: Leader
Power Source: Arcane
Key Ability: Charisma
Secondary Abilities: Intelligence, Constitution

Armor Proficiencies: Cloth, leather, hide, chainmail; light shield
Weapon Proficiencies: Simple melee, longsword, scimitar, short sword, simple ranged, military ranged
Implements: Wands
Bonus to Defense: +1 Reflex or Will

Hit Points at 1st Level: 6
Hit Points per Level Gained: 2.5
Healing Surges per Day: 3.5

Trained Skills: You gain one extra trained skill, chosen from the list of class skills below.

Class Skills: Acrobatics (Dex), Arcana (Int), Athletics (Str), Bluff (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Dungeoneering (Wis), Heal (Wis), History (Int), Insight (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Nature (Wis), Perception (Wis), Religion (Int), Streetwise (Cha)

Class Features: *Majestic word* (hybrid), Skill Versatility
Hybrid Talent Options: Bard Armor Proficiency, Bardic Virtue, Song of Rest, *words of friendship*

Majestic Word (Hybrid)

You gain the bard power *majestic word* (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 68). The power functions as normal, except that you can use it only once per encounter.

Skill Versatility

This class feature functions exactly as the bard class feature (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 67).

Hybrid Talent Options

If you take the Hybrid Talent feat, you can select one of the following options.

Bard Armor Proficiency

You gain proficiency with leather armor, hide armor, and chainmail. You also gain proficiency with light shields.

Bardic Virtue

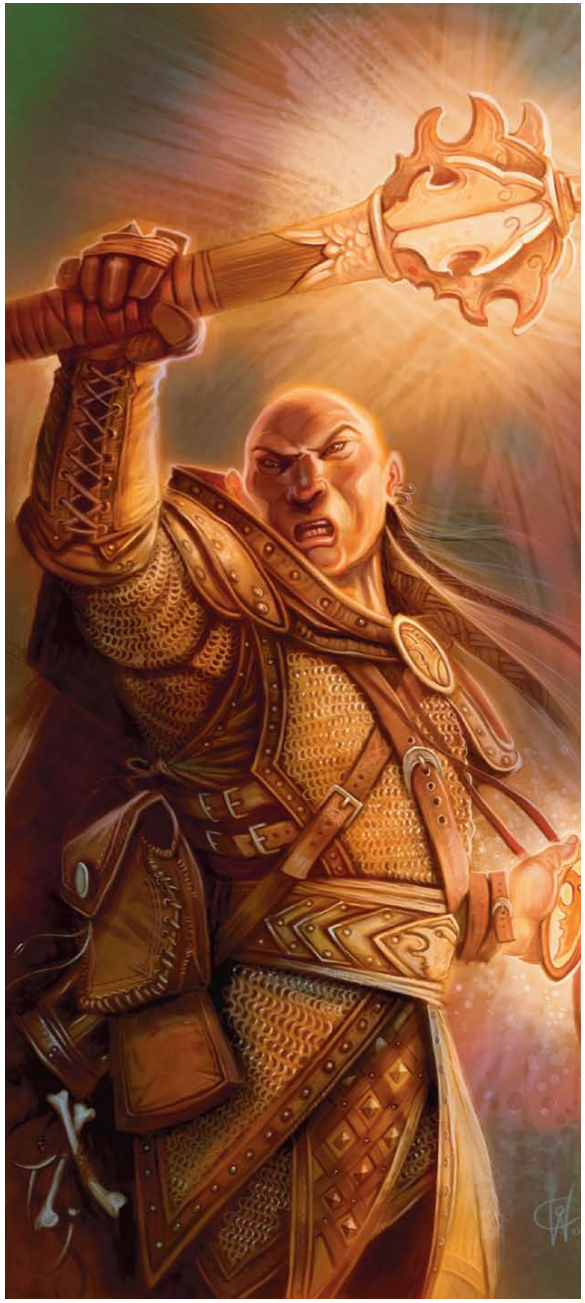
This class feature functions exactly as the bard class feature (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 67).

Song of Rest

This class feature functions exactly as the bard class feature (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 67).

Words of Friendship

You gain the bard power *words of friendship* (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 68).



HYBRID CLERIC

By learning talents beyond those taught to the typical cleric, you have honed yourself into a distinctive divine leader. Your cleric training might represent a youthful devotion or a newly discovered dedication to a god.

As a hybrid cleric, you offer useful healing to a group, but less than a full-fledged cleric. You also give up the versatility of the Channel Divinity and Ritual Casting class features in order to master new talents.

HYBRID CLASS TRAITS
Role: Leader
Power Source: Divine
Key Ability: Strength or Wisdom
Secondary Abilities: Charisma, Wisdom

Armor Proficiencies: Cloth, leather, hide, chainmail
Weapon Proficiencies: Simple melee, simple ranged
Implements: Holy symbols
Bonus to Defense: +1 Will

Hit Points at 1st Level: 6
Hit Points per Level Gained: 2.5
Healing Surges per Day: 3.5

Class Skills: Arcana (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), History (Int), Insight (Wis), Religion (Int)

Class Features: Healer's Lore, *healing word* (hybrid)
Hybrid Talent Options: Cleric Armor Proficiency, Channel Divinity (hybrid)

Healer's Lore

This class feature functions exactly as the cleric class feature (*Player's Handbook*, page 61).

Healing Word (Hybrid)

You gain the cleric power *healing word* (*Player's Handbook*, page 62). The power functions as normal, except that you can use it only once per encounter.

Hybrid Talent Options

If you take the Hybrid Talent feat, you can select one of the following options.

Cleric Armor Proficiency

You gain proficiency with leather armor, hide armor, and chainmail.

Channel Divinity (Hybrid)

This class feature functions as the cleric class feature (*Player's Handbook*, page 61), except that you start with a single cleric Channel Divinity power of your choice.

Good Hybrid Combinations

Cleric/fighter and cleric/paladin offer similar benefits: a great mix of Strength-based melee attacks, high durability, and healing powers to keep yourself and your allies in the fight.

A cleric/invoker stays at the back of the party, launching helpful ranged attacks and devastating area blasts from a position of relative safety.

A cleric/warlord combines leader powers from two different classes to make an effective whole.

DRUID

Your ability to take on the form of a beast marks you unmistakably as a druid, but your bond to the spirits of nature remains somewhat tenuous. Do your druid powers stem from an innate but undeveloped link to primal spirits? Or have you just begun to explore the mysteries of nature after a life spent in other pursuits?

As a hybrid druid, you can assume beast form and likely know powers useful in that form. However, you sacrifice some connections to the natural world—including Primal Aspect and Ritual Casting—to explore another class's talents.

HYBRID CLASS TRAITS
Role: Controller
Power Source: Primal
Key Ability: Wisdom
Secondary Abilities: Dexterity, Constitution

Armor Proficiencies: Cloth, leather, hide
Weapon Proficiencies: Simple melee, simple ranged
Implements: Staffs, totems
Bonus to Defense: +1 Reflex or Will

Hit Points at 1st Level: 6
Hit Points per Level Gained: 2.5
Healing Surges per Day: 3.5

Class Skills: Arcana (Int), Athletics (Str), Diplomacy (Cha), Endurance (Con), Heal (Wis), History (Int), Insight (Wis), Nature (Wis), Perception (Wis)

Class Features: Wild shape
Hybrid Talent Options: Druid Armor Proficiency, Primal Aspect

Wild Shape

You gain the druid power *wild shape* (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 84).

Hybrid Talent Options

If you take the Hybrid Talent feat, you can select one of the following options.

Druid Armor Proficiency

You gain proficiency with leather armor and hide armor.

Primal Aspect

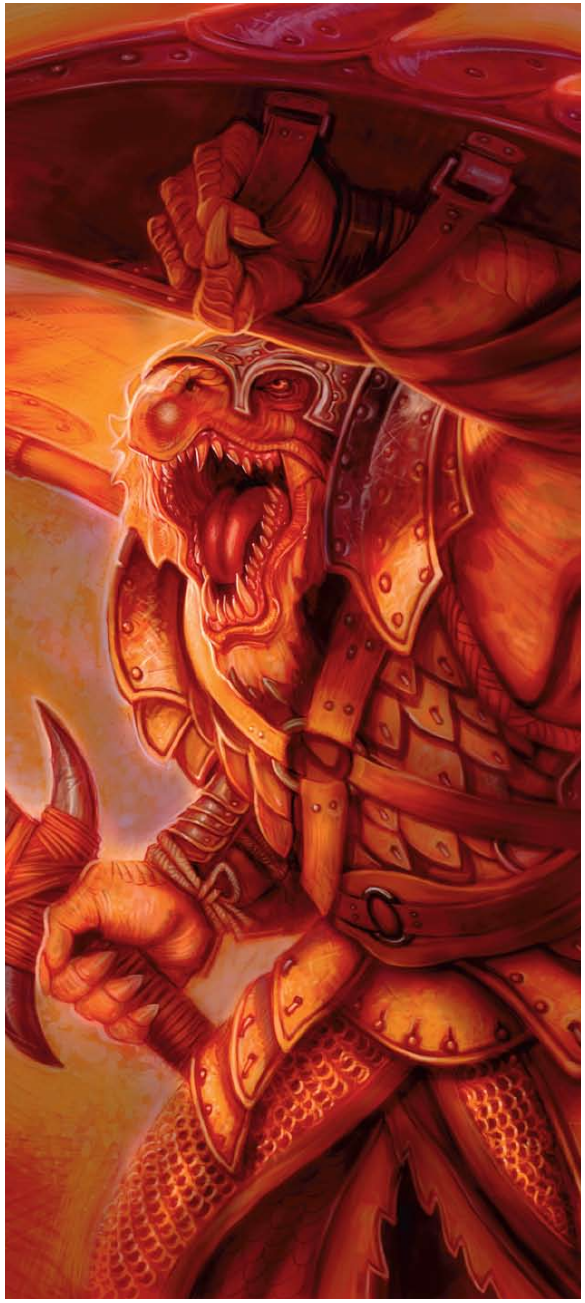
This class feature functions exactly as the druid class feature (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 83).

SELECTING DRUID POWERS

Despite automatically gaining the *wild shape* power, a hybrid druid doesn't come with beast form powers; you must select them from your limited array of druid powers.

At 1st level, you should consider selecting a beast form power as your lone druid at-will power. You can use your other at-will power in humanoid form even if that power isn't a druid power. (Human hybrid druids can afford to pick up both a beast form and a non-beast form druid at-will power.)

If you don't have any beast form powers, you're wasting *wild shape*, so include beast form powers among your attack powers and utility powers. Having a beast form power you can use in every encounter makes your *wild shape* more valuable.



HYBRID FIGHTER

You call on your martial training to guard allies and strike down enemies, and because of your hybrid training, you have tricks up your sleeve that your enemies don't expect.

Many hybrid fighters learned their martial talents in a military or a mercenary organization, but these experiences typically represent only a portion of the character's background.

As a hybrid fighter, you protect your comrades like any other defender—with durability, martial prowess, and battlefield control. However, you give up some of the fighter's talent with weapons and can't mark enemies with all your powers.

HYBRID CLASS TRAITS
Role: Defender
Power Source: Martial
Key Ability: Strength
Secondary Abilities: Dexterity, Wisdom, Constitution

Armor Proficiencies: Cloth, leather, hide, chainmail, scale; light shield, heavy shield
Weapon Proficiencies: Simple melee, military melee, simple ranged, military ranged
Bonus to Defense: +1 Fortitude

Hit Points at 1st Level: 7.5
Hit Points per Level Gained: 3
Healing Surges per Day: 4.5

Class Skills: Athletics (Str), Endurance (Con), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Streetwise (Cha)

Class Features: Combat Challenge (hybrid)
Hybrid Talent Options: Combat Superiority, Fighter Armor Proficiency, Fighter Combat Talent

Combat Challenge (Hybrid)

This class feature functions as the fighter class feature (*Player's Handbook*, page 76), except that you can use it to mark only enemies you attack with fighter powers and fighter paragon path powers.

Hybrid Talent Options

If you take the Hybrid Talent feat, you can select one of the following options.

Combat Superiority

This class feature functions exactly as the fighter class feature (*Player's Handbook*, page 76).

Fighter Armor Proficiency

You gain proficiency with leather armor, hide armor, chainmail, and scale armor. You also gain proficiency with light shields and heavy shields.

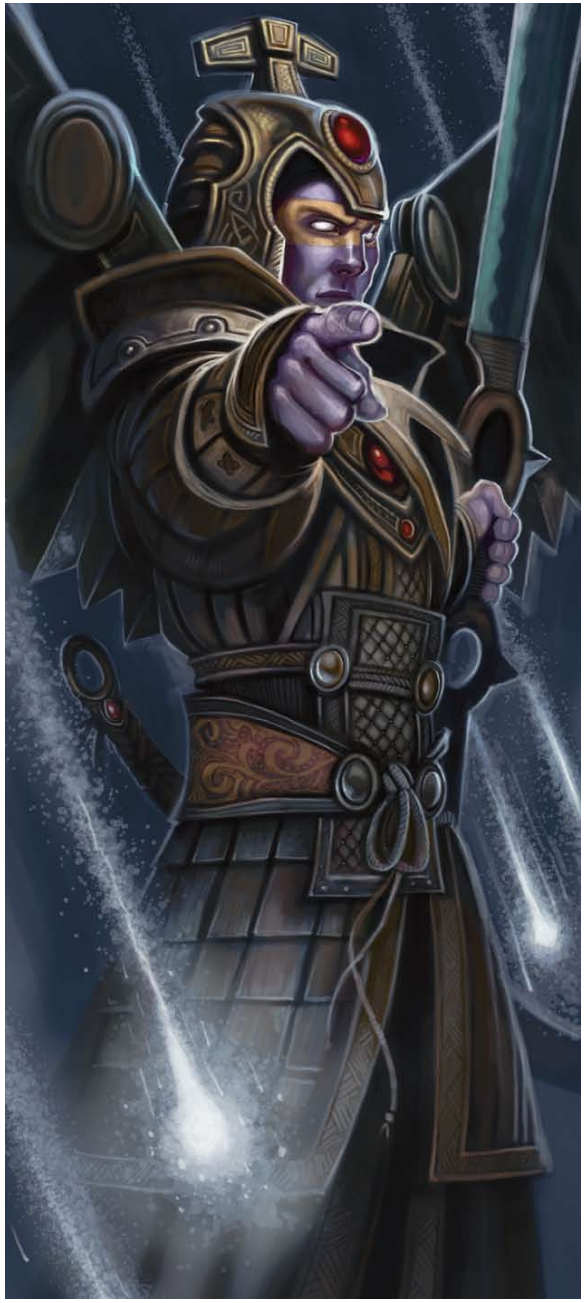
Fighter Combat Talent

When you select this option, you choose one of the following class features.

Battlerager Vigor: This class feature functions exactly as the fighter class feature (*Martial Power*, page 6).

Fighter Weapon Talent: This class feature functions exactly as the fighter class feature (*Player's Handbook*, page 76).

Tempest Technique: This class feature functions exactly as the fighter class feature (*Martial Power*, page 6).



HYBRID INVOKER

You wield the might of the gods, mixed with powers more earthly. But why would you forgo pure devotion to the secrets of the invoker? Did you uncover a mystery that frightened you from wielding such unfettered power? Or has your understanding of divinity only recently awakened?

As a hybrid invoker, you wield the gods' own might to smite your foes. However, you forgo the versatility of Channel Divinity and Ritual Casting to gain the benefits of another class.

HYBRID CLASS TRAITS
Role: Controller
Power Source: Divine
Key Ability: Wisdom
Secondary Abilities: Constitution, Intelligence

Armor Proficiencies: Cloth, leather, hide, chainmail
Weapon Proficiencies: Simple melee, simple ranged
Implements: Rods, staffs
Bonus to Defense: +1 Fortitude, Reflex, or Will

Hit Points at 1st Level: 5
Hit Points per Level Gained: 2
Healing Surges per Day: 3

Class Skills: Arcana (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Endurance (Con), History (Int), Insight (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Religion (Int)

Class Features: Covenant Manifestation
Hybrid Talent Options: Channel Divinity (hybrid), Invoker Armor Proficiency

Covenant Manifestation

You gain the Covenant Manifestation of a Divine Covenant of your choice (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 101).

Hybrid Talent Options

If you take the Hybrid Talent feat, you can select one of the following options.

Channel Divinity (Hybrid)

This class feature functions as the invoker class feature (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 101), except that you start with a single Channel Divinity power. That power is the Channel Divinity power associated with the same Divine Covenant as your Covenant Manifestation.

Invoker Armor Proficiency

You gain proficiency with leather armor, hide armor, and chainmail.

Good Hybrid Combinations

A cleric/invoker offers a divine combination of mass devastation and healing powers.

An invoker/wizard has access to a vast array of controller powers. Consider taking the Hybrid Talent feat to get Channel Divinity (*preserver's rebuke*) to make optimal use of a high Intelligence score.

The invoker/shaman mixes two very different traditions of power, both with their own unique ceremonies and rituals, to great effect on the battlefield.

HYBRID PALADIN

You combine the divine authority of a paladin with the talents of another class to become a formidable protector. Many hybrid paladins have only recently pledged themselves to the path of the divine warrior after a lifetime spent in other pursuits. A few, however, have recognized that single-minded devotion isn't for them and expanded their abilities accordingly.

As a hybrid paladin, you bring a useful marking ability and strong melee powers to a group. Like other defenders, you are durable and can protect allies well, but you give up much of your healing capability to gain the talents of another class.

HYBRID CLASS TRAITS
Role: Defender
Power Source: Divine
Key Ability: Strength or Charisma
Secondary Abilities: Charisma, Wisdom

Armor Proficiencies: Cloth, leather, hide, chainmail, scale, plate; light shield, heavy shield
Weapon Proficiencies: Simple melee, military melee, simple ranged
Implements: Holy symbols
Bonus to Defense: +1 Fortitude, Reflex, or Will

Hit Points at 1st Level: 7.5
Hit Points per Level Gained: 3
Healing Surges per Day: 5

Class Skills: Diplomacy (Cha), Endurance (Con), Heal (Wis), History (Int), Insight (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Religion (Int)

Class Features: *Divine challenge* (hybrid)

Hybrid Talent Options: Channel Divinity (hybrid), *lay on hands*, Paladin Armor Proficiency

Divine Challenge (Hybrid)

You gain the paladin power *divine challenge* (*Player's Handbook*, page 91). The power functions as normal, except that the following text replaces the power's second paragraph:

> "While the target is marked, it takes a –2 penalty to attack rolls for any attack that doesn't include you as a target. The first time it makes an attack that doesn't include you as a target before the start of your next turn, you can use an immediate reaction to deal radiant damage to the target equal to your Charisma modifier. The damage increases to 2 + your Charisma modifier at 11th level and 4 + your Charisma modifier at 21st level."

Hybrid Talent Options

If you take the Hybrid Talent feat, you can select one of the following options.

Channel Divinity (Hybrid Paladin)

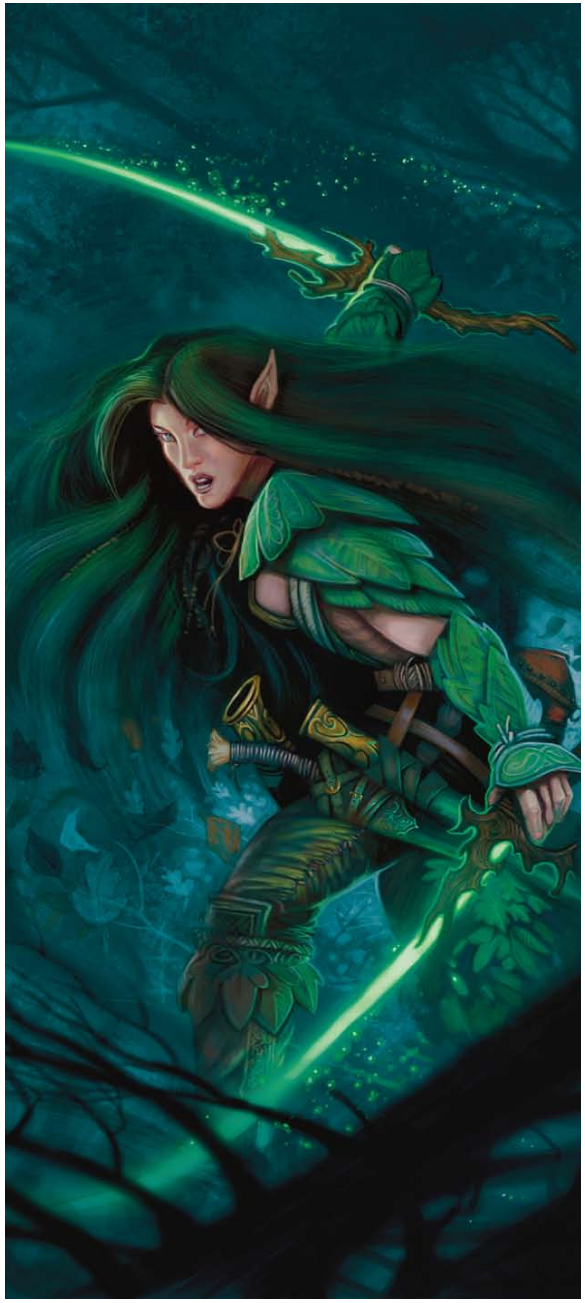
This class feature functions as the paladin class feature (*Player's Handbook*, page 91), except that you start with a single paladin Channel Divinity power of your choice.

Lay on Hands

This class feature functions exactly as the paladin class feature (*Player's Handbook*, page 91).

Paladin Armor Proficiency

You gain proficiency with leather armor, hide armor, chainmail, scale armor, and plate armor. You also gain proficiency with light shields and heavy shields.



HYBRID RANGER

You blend the hunter's single-minded pursuit of a quarry with other talents to become a formidable warrior. You might have learned your ranger features and powers as a young wanderer or an independent scout before taking up new skills. Alternatively, you might have been driven only recently to a life in the wilderness.

You retain the ranger's damage-dealing capability. However, you must give up the specialization gained through the ranger's Fighting Style class feature.

HYBRID CLASS TRAITS
Role: Striker
Power Source: Martial
Key Ability: Strength or Dexterity
Secondary Abilities: Wisdom

Armor Proficiencies: Cloth, leather, hide
Weapon Proficiencies: Simple melee, military melee, simple ranged, military ranged
Bonus to Defense: +1 Fortitude or Reflex

Hit Points at 1st Level: 6
Hit Points per Level Gained: 2.5
Healing Surges per Day: 3

Trained Skills: You gain one extra trained skill, chosen from the list of class skills below.

Class Skills: Acrobatics (Dex), Athletics (Str), Dungeoneering (Wis), Endurance (Con), Heal (Wis), Nature (Wis), Perception (Wis), Stealth (Dex)

Class Features: Hunter's Quarry (hybrid)
Hybrid Talent Options: Prime Shot, Ranger Armor Proficiency, Ranger Fighting Style

Hunter's Quarry (Hybrid)

This class feature functions as the ranger class feature (*Player's Handbook*, page 104), except that you can deal the extra damage only when you hit your quarry with a ranger power or a ranger paragon path power.

Hybrid Talent Options

If you take the Hybrid Talent feat, you can select one of the following options.

Prime Shot

This class feature functions exactly as the ranger class feature (*Player's Handbook*, page 104).

Ranger Armor Proficiency

You gain proficiency with leather armor and hide armor.

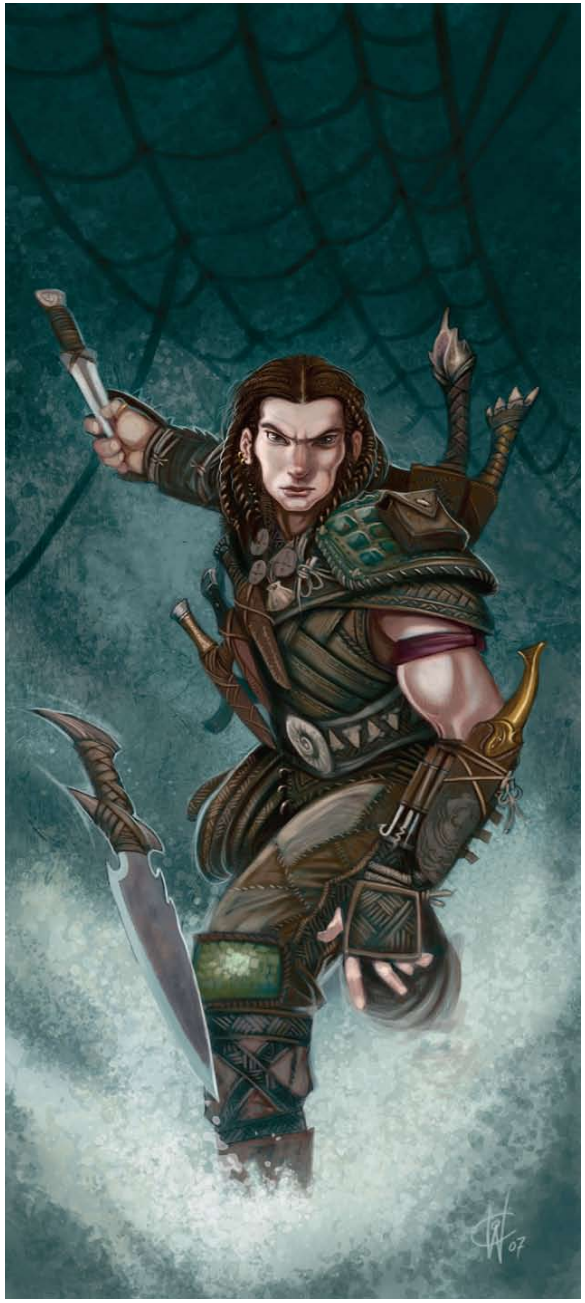
Ranger Fighting Style

When you select this option, you can choose one of the following class features.

Archer Fighting Style: This class feature functions exactly as the ranger class feature (*Player's Handbook*, page 104).

Beast Mastery (Hybrid): This class feature functions as the ranger class feature (*Martial Power*, page 38), except that the beast takes a –1 penalty to attack rolls and all defenses.

Two-Blade Fighting Style: This class feature functions exactly as the ranger class feature (*Player's Handbook*, page 104).



HYBRID ROGUE

You know the value of a well-placed knife, even if you don't bring the rogue's full complement of talents to every situation.

The most common backstory for a hybrid rogue is a childhood spent on the mean streets of a city, learning enough tricks to stay alive and out of prison. Alternatively, you might have been a respected member of society once, driven to a rogue's life by cruel fate or the machinations of your enemies.

You can be just as sneaky and deadly as a nonhybrid rogue, but you must sacrifice some rogue options to gain those of another class.

HYBRID CLASS TRAITS
Role: Striker
Power Source: Martial
Key Ability: Dexterity
Secondary Abilities: Strength, Charisma

Armor Proficiencies: Cloth, leather
Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, hand crossbow, shuriken, sling, short sword
Bonus to Defense: +1 Reflex

Hit Points at 1st Level: 6
Hit Points per Level Gained: 2.5
Healing Surges per Day: 3

Trained Skills: You gain two extra trained skills, chosen from the list of class skills below.

Class Skills: Acrobatics (Dex), Athletics (Str), Bluff (Cha), Dungeoneering (Wis), Insight (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Perception (Wis), Stealth (Dex), Streetwise (Cha), Thievery (Dex)

Class Features: Sneak Attack (hybrid)
Hybrid Talent Options: First Strike, Rogue Tactics, Rogue Weapon Talent

Sneak Attack (Hybrid)

This class feature functions as the rogue class feature (*Player's Handbook*, page 117), except that you can deal the extra damage only when you hit with a rogue power or a rogue paragon path power.

Hybrid Talent Options

If you take the Hybrid Talent feat, you can select one of the following options.

First Strike

This class feature functions exactly as the rogue class feature (*Player's Handbook*, page 117).

Rogue Tactics

This class feature functions exactly as the rogue class feature (*Player's Handbook*, page 117).

Rogue Weapon Talent

This class feature functions exactly as the rogue class feature (*Player's Handbook*, page 117).

Good Hybrid Combinations

A rogue/sorcerer can add some devious ranged and burst attacks to a repertoire of melee powers.

If your hybrid rogue prefers brawn over guile, add the hybrid fighter, choose Rogue Tactics through the Hybrid Talent feat, and then pick either Brutal Scoundrel or Ruthless Ruffian.

HYBRID SHAMAN

You have learned to call a spirit companion to your side, yet your connection to primal spirits isn't as strong as a full-fledged shaman's. What creates this dichotomy? Did you flee or fail a rite of passage before its completion, weakening your link to the spirit world? Have you angered the spirits, causing their voices to quiet in your mind?

As a hybrid shaman, you have a spirit companion, as well as the ability call on spirits for healing, but you give up many other talents to pursue a second class.

Companion Spirit (Hybrid)

You gain the *call spirit companion* power (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 120).

In addition, choose one of the Companion Spirit options (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 119). You don't gain the Spirit Boon or the powers granted by that choice, but you are considered to have the class feature for the purpose of meeting prerequisites and using the bonuses in powers tailored for it.

Special: In order to select the at-will attack power associated with a Companion Spirit, you must have the appropriate spirit. For example, you can't select the *stalker's strike* power unless you have Stalker Spirit.

Healing Spirit (Hybrid)

You gain the shaman power *healing spirit* (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 120). The power functions as normal, except that you can use it only once per encounter.

Speak with Spirits

You gain the shaman power *speak with spirits* (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 120).

Hybrid Talent Options

If you take the Hybrid Talent feat, you can select one of the following options.

Spirit Boon

You gain the Spirit Boon of the Companion Spirit option you chose (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 119).

Spirit's Power

You gain the opportunity action power of the Companion Spirit option you chose (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 119). For example, if you chose Stalker Spirit, you gain the *spirit's fangs* power.

HYBRID CLASS TRAITS
Role: Leader
Power Source: Primal
Key Ability: Wisdom
Secondary Abilities: Constitution, Intelligence

Armor Proficiencies: Cloth, leather
Weapon Proficiencies: Simple melee, longspear
Implements: Totems
Bonus to Defense: +1 Fortitude or Will

Hit Points at 1st Level: 6
Hit Points per Level Gained: 2.5
Healing Surges per Day: 3.5

Class Skills: Arcana (Int), Athletics (Str), Endurance (Con), Heal (Wis), History (Int), Insight (Wis), Nature (Wis), Perception (Wis), Religion (Int)

Class Features: Companion Spirit (hybrid), *healing spirit* (hybrid), *speak with spirits*
Hybrid Talent Options: Spirit Boon, Spirit's Power

HYBRID SORCERER

You know the innate power of arcane magic flowing through your body and blood, yet it does not speak to you as strongly as it would if you were a full-fledged sorcerer.

Is your sorcerous bloodline diluted, requiring you to learn other talents to survive as an adventurer? Or do you fear what might happen should you give yourself over fully to the luring pulse of magic?

As a hybrid sorcerer, you're capable of unleashing powerful gouts of arcane fury. But you don't have the resilience of a nonhybrid sorcerer or the other quirks derived from a dedication to sorcerous ways.

HYBRID CLASS TRAITS
Role: Striker
Power Source: Arcane
Key Ability: Charisma
Secondary Abilities: Dexterity, Strength

Armor Proficiencies: Cloth
Weapon Proficiencies: Simple melee, simple ranged
Implements: Daggers, staffs
Bonus to Defense: +1 Will

Hit Points at 1st Level: 6
Hit Points per Level Gained: 2.5
Healing Surges per Day: 3

Class Skills: Arcana (Int), Athletics (Str), Bluff (Cha), Diplomacy (Cha), Dungeoneering (Wis), Endurance (Con), History (Int), Insight (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Nature (Wis)

Class Features: Sorcerous Power
Hybrid Talent Options: Soul of the Sorcerer

Sorcerous Power

You gain a bonus to the damage rolls of sorcerer powers and sorcerer paragon path powers equal to your Strength or Dexterity modifier. This bonus increases by 2 at 11th level and by 2 again at 21st level.

You choose which modifier to use when you make your character. If you choose Strength, you can use your Strength modifier in place of your Dexterity or Intelligence modifier to determine your AC while you are not wearing heavy armor.

Hybrid Talent Option

If you take the Hybrid Talent feat, you can select the following option.

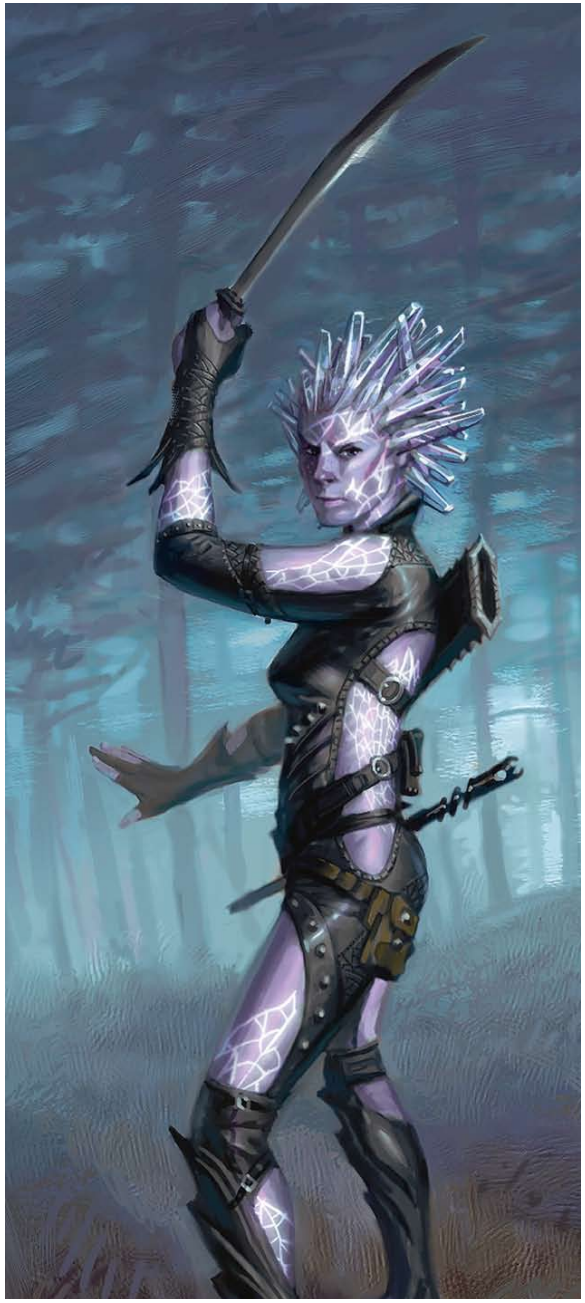
Soul of the Sorcerer

Choose one of the following class features: Dragon Soul (*Player's Handbook 2*, 137), Soul of the Cosmic Cycle (*Arcane Power*, 27), Storm Soul (*Arcane Power*, 26), or Wild Soul (*Player's Handbook 2*, 137). You gain that class feature, and you are considered to have the associated Spell Source for the purpose of meeting prerequisites and using the bonuses in powers tailored for it.

Good Hybrid Combinations

Add the hybrid bard to your hybrid sorcerer to gain healing powers and to heighten your character's reputation as a valorous trickster.

A rogue/sorcerer gains some useful melee attack powers, as long as he or she favors Dexterity and the Wild Magic or Cosmic Magic traditions.



HYBRID SWORDMAGE

You are no stranger to discipline and training, but you don't share the single-minded commitment to arcane swordplay that a full-fledged swordmage has. Perhaps in your youth you dabbled in the fundamentals of spell and blade but never dedicated yourself to these studies wholeheartedly. Some hybrid swordmages are new students of ancient magical traditions, coming most often from other arcane or martial traditions.

As a hybrid swordmage, you provide a good mix of melee prowess, battlefield control, and utility, but you can't hold back waves of enemies quite as well as a nonhybrid swordmage.

HYBRID CLASS TRAITS
Role: Defender
Power Source: Arcane
Key Ability: Intelligence
Secondary Abilities: Strength, Constitution

Armor Proficiencies: Cloth, leather
Weapon Proficiencies: Simple melee, military light blades, military heavy blades, simple ranged
Implements: Light blades, heavy blades
Bonus to Defense: +1 Will

Hit Points at 1st Level: 7.5
Hit Points per Level Gained: 3
Healing Surges per Day: 4

Class Skills: Arcana (Int), Athletics (Str), Diplomacy (Cha), Endurance (Con), History (Int), Insight (Wis), Intimidate (Cha)

Class Features: Swordbond, Swordmage Aegis (hybrid)
Hybrid Talent Options: Swordmage Warding

Swordbond

This class feature functions exactly as the swordmage class feature (*Forgotten Realms Player's Guide*, page 26).

Swordmage Aegis (Hybrid)

This class feature functions as the swordmage class feature (*Forgotten Realms Player's Guide*, page 26), except that you can use the power that you choose only once per encounter. However, you regain the use of that power when its target drops to 0 hit points or when its mark is superseded by another.

Hybrid Talent Option

If you take the Hybrid Talent feat, you can select the following option.

Swordmage Warding

This class feature functions exactly as the swordmage class feature (*Forgotten Realms Player's Guide*, page 26).

Good Hybrid Combinations

Most hybrid swordmages sacrifice some of their defense for greater versatility. Combining the hybrid swordmage with the hybrid wizard gives you a great breadth of powers that share the same key ability.

If you're dedicated to staying in melee, consider adding the hybrid warlord, and put your Intelligence to good use as a tactician.

HYBRID WARDEN

In order to stand strong against the despoilers of the natural world, you have augmented your primal tenacity with the capabilities of another class. These capabilities might be other ways of channeling primal spirits, or you might have decided that you can't count on the spirits for all your strength.

As a hybrid warden, you can still punish foes for attacking your allies. However, by dividing your focus between two classes, you must give up some of the class's innate durability (in the form of Font of Life and Guardian Might).

HYBRID CLASS TRAITS
Role: Defender
Power Source: Primal
Key Ability: Strength
Secondary Abilities: Constitution, Wisdom

Armor Proficiencies: Cloth, leather, hide; light shield, heavy shield
Weapon Proficiencies: Simple melee, military melee, simple ranged
Bonus to Defense: +1 Fortitude or Will

Hit Points at 1st Level: 8.5
Hit Points per Level Gained: 3.5
Healing Surges per Day: 4.5

Class Skills: Athletics (Str), Dungeoneering (Wis), Endurance (Con), Heal (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Nature (Wis), Perception (Wis)

Class Features: Nature's Wrath (hybrid)
Hybrid Talent Options: Font of Life, Warden's Armored Might

Nature's Wrath (Hybrid)

This class feature functions as the warden class feature (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 153), except that you mark only one adjacent enemy when you use the class feature's marking ability.

Hybrid Talent Options

If you take the Hybrid Talent feat, you can select one of the following options.

Font of Life

This class feature functions exactly as the warden class feature (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 153).

Warden's Armored Might

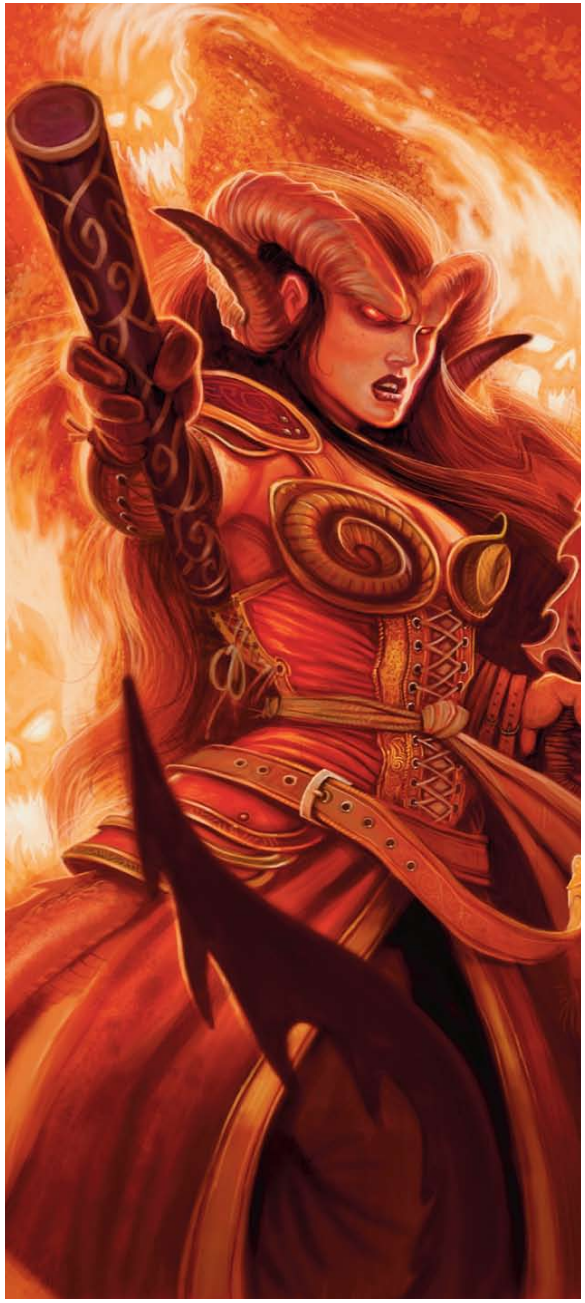
You gain the Guardian Might class feature (*Player's Handbook 2*, page 153). You also gain proficiency with leather armor and hide armor. You also gain proficiency with light shields and heavy shields.

Good Hybrid Combinations

The fighter/warden offers great durability and melee attacks, though this combination might need some help with AC (Warden's Armored Might or Fighter Armor Proficiency are good fixes).

Adding the hybrid cleric gives the hybrid warden useful healing powers; Wisdom is likely your secondary ability, making powers tailored for the wild warden ideal.

Combining your hybrid warden with the hybrid ranger increases your damage output without hurting your AC too much.



HYBRID WARLOCK

You draw power from snippets of arcane lore wrested from dusty tomes and primeval entities, but these secrets do not wholly define or limit your abilities.

What keeps you from fully embracing the pacts of a warlock? Do you fear the price that such bargains might entail? Or have you not yet managed to pin down the final secret that would unleash your arcane destiny?

As a hybrid warlock, you command excellent damage-dealing ability along with some control powers, but you must give up some of the more notable features of the class, including the Pact Boon and Shadow Walk.

HYBRID CLASS TRAITS
Role: Striker
Power Source: Arcane
Key Ability: Constitution or Charisma
Secondary Abilities: Constitution, Charisma, Intelligence

Armor Proficiencies: Cloth, leather
Weapon Proficiencies: Simple melee, simple ranged
Implements: Rods, wands
Bonus to Defense: +1 Reflex or Will

Hit Points at 1st Level: 6
Hit Points per Level Gained: 2.5
Healing Surges per Day: 3

Class Skills: Arcana (Int), Bluff (Cha), History (Int), Insight (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Religion (Int), Streetwise (Cha), Thievery (Dex)

Class Features: Eldritch Pact (hybrid), Warlock's Curse (hybrid)
Hybrid Talent Options: Prime Shot, Shadow Walk, Warlock Pact Boon

Eldritch Pact (Hybrid)

This class feature functions as the warlock class feature (*Player's Handbook*, page 131), except that you don't gain the at-will attack power or the Pact Boon granted by it.

Warlock's Curse (Hybrid)

This class feature functions as the warlock class feature (*Player's Handbook*, page 131), except that you can deal the extra damage only when you hit a cursed enemy with a warlock power or a warlock paragon path power.

Hybrid Talent Options

If you take the Hybrid Talent feat, you can select one of the following options.

Prime Shot

This class feature functions exactly as the warlock class feature (*Player's Handbook*, page 131).

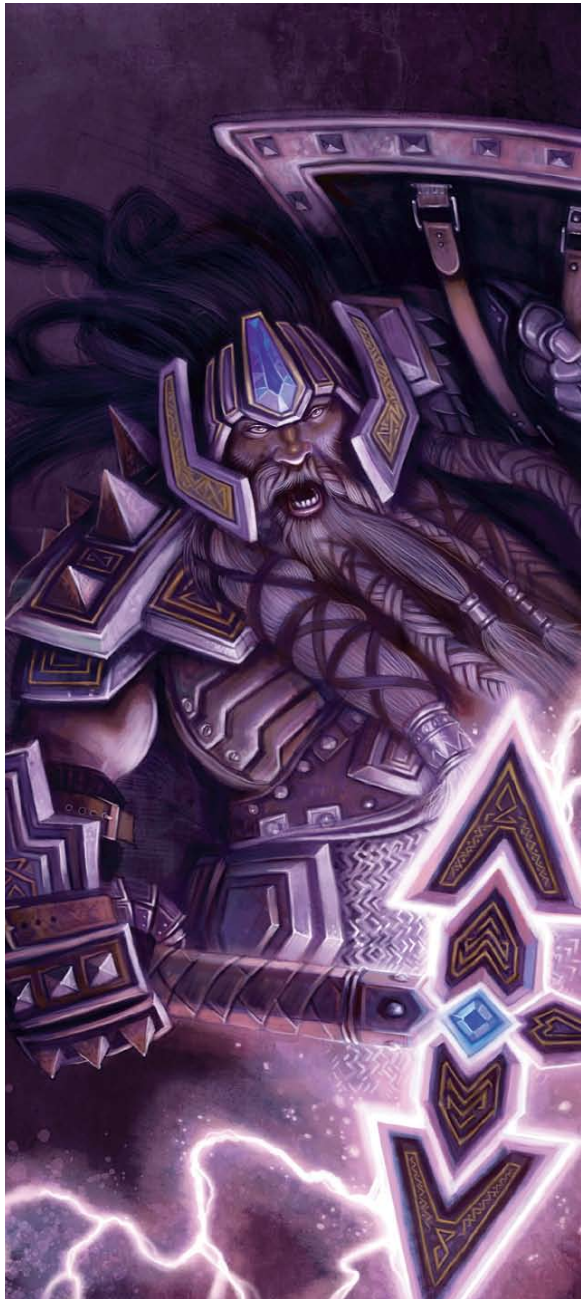
Shadow Walk

This class feature functions exactly as the warlock class feature (*Player's Handbook*, page 131).

Warlock Pact Boon

You gain the Pact Boon associated with your Eldritch Pact.

To select this option, you must have the at-will attack power associated with your pact. If you later retrain that power, you lose the benefit of this option.



HYBRID WARLORD

You have a talent for command, and you have combined that with other skills rather than focusing entirely on leadership.

How and where did you come to learn the intricacies of command? Did an early stint in the military or tutelage at the feet of a tribal leader inspire you to grasp the reins of authority? Or have you only recently donned the mantle of leadership?

As a hybrid warlord, you bring talents of combat leadership and healing to a group, though you give up the Commanding Presence class feature.

HYBRID CLASS TRAITS
Role: Leader
Power Source: Martial
Key Ability: Strength
Secondary Abilities: Intelligence, Charisma

Armor Proficiencies: Cloth, leather, hide, chainmail; light shield
Weapon Proficiencies: Simple melee, military melee, simple ranged
Bonus to Defense: +1 Fortitude or Will

Hit Points at 1st Level: 6
Hit Points per Level Gained: 2.5
Healing Surges per Day: 3.5

Class Skills: Athletics (Str), Diplomacy (Cha), Endurance (Con), Heal (Wis), History (Int), Intimidate (Cha)

Class Features: Combat Leader, *inspiring word* (hybrid)
Hybrid Talent Options: Commanding Presence (hybrid), Warlord Armor Proficiency

Combat Leader

This class feature functions exactly as the warlord class feature (*Player's Handbook*, page 144).

Inspiring Word (Hybrid)

You gain the warlord power *inspiring word* (*Player's Handbook*, page 145). The power functions as normal, except that you can use it only once per encounter.

Hybrid Talent Options

If you take the Hybrid Talent feat, you can select one of the following options.

Commanding Presence (Hybrid)

This class feature functions as the warlord class feature (*Player's Handbook*, page 144), except that you can use it only once per encounter.

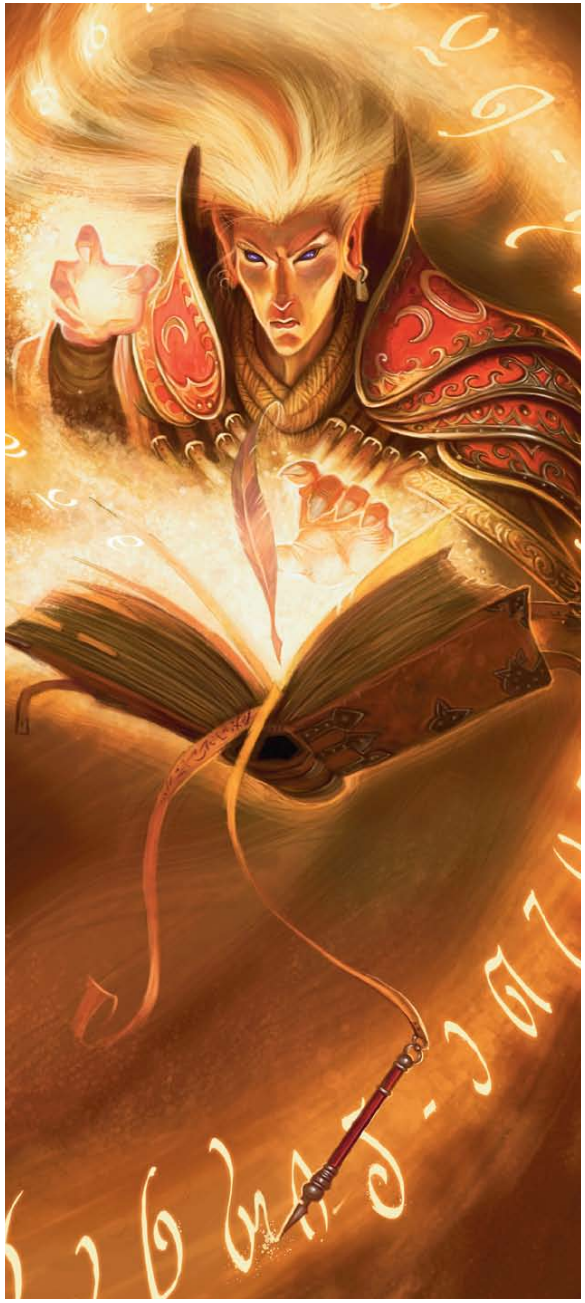
Warlord Armor Proficiency

You gain proficiency with leather armor, hide armor, and chainmail, and with light shields.

Good Hybrid Combinations

Many warlords secretly consider themselves defenders, so it's no wonder that paladin/warlord and fighter/warlord are such common hybrid combinations. Both options add durability and melee control while retaining plenty of healing and leadership.

For the inspiring warlord, what's more inspiring than charging into battle with the savage war cry of the barbarian? Pick up powers tailored for the thaneborn barbarian to benefit from your secondary Charisma score.



As a hybrid wizard, you have much of a wizard's versatility in power selection, but you give up the flexibility provided by the Ritual Casting and Spellbook class features, as well as the potent Arcane Implement Mastery class feature.

HYBRID CLASS TRAITS
Role: Controller
Power Source: Arcane
Key Ability: Intelligence
Secondary Abilities: Constitution, Dexterity, Wisdom

Armor Proficiencies: Cloth
Weapon Proficiencies: Dagger, quarterstaff
Implements: Orbs, staffs, wands
Bonus to Defense: +1 Will

Hit Points at 1st Level: 5
Hit Points per Level Gained: 2
Healing Surges per Day: 3

Class Skills: Arcana (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Dungeoneering (Wis), History (Int), Insight (Wis), Nature (Wis), Religion (Int)

Class Features: Cantrips
Hybrid Talent Options: Arcane Implement Mastery

Cantrips

This class feature functions exactly as the wizard class feature (*Player's Handbook*, page 158).

Hybrid Talent Option

If you take the Hybrid Talent feat, you can select the following option.

Arcane Implement Mastery

This class feature functions exactly as the wizard class feature (*Player's Handbook*, page 157).

Good Hybrid Combinations

As a hybrid wizard, you're not particularly durable, so you must choose your second hybrid class, as well as your powers, with care.

The swordmage shares the same key ability, but that class's predilection for melee combat is at odds with the typical wizard's preference for staying out of the fray. To keep up in melee, select a good mix of close wizard powers and some feats that improve your survivability. Alternatively, focus your swordmage power selection on ranged powers and area powers and enter melee only as a last resort.

A cleric/wizard with good Intelligence and Wisdom scores can safely and effectively remain in the back ranks while supporting allies with battlefield control and healing.

Adding the avenger class to your hybrid wizard allows you to surprise your enemies with the occasional deadly melee attack. Taking Armor of Faith through the Hybrid Talent feat gives you the courage to stay close enough to deliver such an attack.

Expeditionary Dispatches: Mournland Express

BY ANDREW SCHNEIDER

illustrations by Jason A. Engle

City life got you down? Take in the pastoral vistas between Sharn and Wroat on the Dagger River Regional. Need to concentrate on your petition to the Twelve? The Dead Man's Crossing offers the ultimate in peace and quiet from Fort Zombie to Korth. Floating five feet over a line of Cannith-made conductor stones and powered by an air elemental with enough speed to outrun a hungry dragon, the lightning rail is the premier travel service across Khorvaire. A scion of House Orien serves as conductor, overseeing a full complement of house crew to ensure that your trip is pleasant and comfortable. Specially contracted guards from the Blademarks Guild are vigilant, ready to insulate you from the wilds beyond your window, while a Fabricators Guild artificer maintains the coach and carts at peak performance. See the wonders of the world in comfort rivaling a Ghallanda lodge. Lightning rail–fast, safe, and at your service.

New with the Mournland Express, passage from Atur to the south shore of Lake Cyre in just two days!

–Advertisement in the Korranberg Chronicle

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The Mournland Express is the newest addition to House Orien's lightning rail service. The Express makes weekly trips from Atur in Karrnath to the edge of the Mournland, just north of Valenar's fort Griffonclaw, where enterprising traders and adventurers out of Stillwater Station gather for a return trip to civilization. Along the way, the Express stops in Vedykar in Karrnath and Gatherhold on the Talenta Plains, among smaller stops.

Alaria d'Orien championed the establishment of this route, and she has assembled a small but dedicated crew to staff the Express. Dalus d'Cannith is in charge of maintenance and repair, the famed cook Traven of Sharn concocts the meals, and Elkavar d'Deneith oversees a rotating complement of guards from the Blademarks Guild.

The Crew

The significant crewmembers of the Mournland Express are detailed here.

Alaria d'Orien, Conductor

He's out there, waiting for me. I know it in my heart. You're asking me to give up hope while there's still breath left in my body. I won't do it.

Alaria d'Orien	**Level 8 Controller**
Medium natural humanoid (human)	XP 350
Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +12	
HP 86; **Bloodied** 43	
AC 22; **Fortitude** 19, **Reflex** 20, **Will** 21	
Speed 6; see also *teleportation savant*	
⊕ **Dagger** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+13 vs. AC; 1d4 + 4 damage.	
Disrupting Warp (standard; at-will) ✦ **Force, Teleportation**	
Ranged 10; +12 vs. Will; 2d6 + 6 force damage, and Alaria teleports the target 1 square.	
Painful Jaunt (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Teleportation**	
Ranged 10; +12 vs. Will; 3d8 + 6 damage, and Alaria causes the target and one ally within range to swap positions.	
Temporal Disruption (standard; encounter)	
Area burst 1 within 10; +10 vs. Will; the target is dazed and slowed (save ends both). *Aftereffect:* The target is slowed (save ends).	
Teleportation Savant (minor; encounter)	
Alaria gains a teleportation speed equal to her current speed until the end of her next turn.	
Dimension Leap (standard; recharge ⚁ ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Teleportation**	
Alaria teleports 5 squares and gains a +2 bonus to all defenses until the start of its next turn.	
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common	
Skills Arcana +14, Endurance +10, Insight +12	
Str 13 (+5) **Dex** 14 (+6) **Wis** 16 (+7)	
Con 14 (+5) **Int** 20 (+9) **Cha** 13 (+5)	
Equipment dagger	

For Alaria, the Day of Mourning was the day she was to wed lightning rail conductor Jarick d'Orien. Standing atop the bluffs of Gatherhold at the edge of Lake Cyre, the Hand of Orien was waiting for Jarick's train to round the edge of the lake, when she witnessed the cataclysm that ended the Last War. Alaria vanished that day, reappearing four years later at House Orien's headquarters in Passage, Dalus d'Cannith at her side, a request to become a lightning rail conductor, and a plan for the Mournland Express in her hands and mind.

Jarick's loss haunts Alaria. Her desire to establish a route near or through the Mournland is singularly linked to the hope that she might someday find her lost love. She often uses her powers to disappear from the train for hours at a time, searching the nearby Mournland for a clue to Jarick's fate. Although she is outwardly calm and composed, her every action is weighed against how it might affect her quest. This focus has had an unexpected side effect however. Through some conduit of grief and pain, Alaria has forged a bond with the train's elemental.

Hook: Runaway Train

Alaria has vanished into the Mournland on another search for her beloved. Unfortunately, a surge from the engine's elemental has sent the train out of control. The PCs have to find some way to get Alaria back to the helm or otherwise stop the train.

Hook: Detour

Mysterious agents approach Alaria, promising a reunion with Jarick if she is willing to take the train down the conductor stones into Metrol. Can the PCs convince Alaria to turn around or, failing that, keep

everyone alive through the length of the detour? Can the characters find out who the agents are and whom they serve?

Traven, Head Chef

More salt. That's not salt, that's arseni-! Ah, how can I help you?

Traven is one of Khorvaire's premier chefs. He's also a changeling, as well as a freelance information broker and spy. When the news of a renewed route along the Mournland was leaked, Traven applied for the position of head chef. His position on the Mournland Express has made Traven invaluable for the rapid transit of sensitive information between Karrnath and Valenar, as well as a source for information about events on and around the route. Traven's maintains a pleasantly foppish demeanor in his human chef persona, though he is, in truth, careful and calculating.

Hook: Missing Missives

A set of secret documents has been stolen from the Traven's possession. He asks the PCs to search the train and recover the documents before the lightning rail arrives at its next stop.

Hook: Protecting Traven

Being so valuable to various factions has quickly become a curse for Traven. He is no warrior, but demands increase with every trip. The changeling has to refuse someone who might hold a deadly grudge, or already has refused someone who is now out for blood. Traven needs allies who can provide him an out or pull off the job for him.

Dalus d'Cannith, Inventor

Explain? There's no point. You can't possibly understand.

Dalus d'Cannith	**Level 7 Artillery**
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 300
Initiative +5 **Senses** Perception +5	
HP 61; **Bloodied** 30	
AC 19; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 19, **Will** 18	
Speed 6	
Mace (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 2 damage.	
Wand Spark (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire, Implement**	
Ranged 10; +12 vs. Reflex; 2d4 + 8 damage.	
Magewright's Fiery Wand (standard; at-will) ✦ **Fire, Implement**	
Ranged 10; +12 vs. Reflex; 1d4 + 4 fire damage, and each enemy adjacent to the target takes 4 fire damage.	
Alchemical Explosion (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) ✦ **Fire**	
Area burst 2 within 10; +12 vs. Reflex; 1d6 + 4 fire damage and ongoing 5 fire damage, and the target is knocked prone.	
Lightning Sacrifice (immediate reaction, when an enemy enters an adjacent square; encounter) ✦ **Lightning, Teleportation**	
Close burst 2; +12 vs. Fortitude, 4d6 + 4 lightning damage, and Dalus takes half that damage himself and teleports 5 squares.	
Elemental Affinity (minor; at-will)	
Dalus can change the damage type of any one of his powers to one of the following: acid, cold, fire, lightning, or thunder. The change lasts until the end of Dalus's next turn.	
Alignment Unaligned **Languages** Common	
Skills Arcana +12	
Str 16 (+6) **Dex** 14 (+5) **Wis** 14 (+5)	
Con 13 (+4) **Int** 20 (+8) **Cha** 12 (+4)	
Equipment wand	

An inventor whose genius with cutting edge elemental binding borders on insanity, Dalus was once a prominent member of the Fabricators Guild. Dalus chafed at the ethical limitations placed upon his experiments. He set off into the Mournland to find a secret Cannith laboratory. En route, Dalus came across Alaria near collapse as she wandered the wastes. Her beauty charmed him, so he brought her to Stillwater Station.

While Alaria recovered, Dalus had the opportunity to study Hana Aurora d'Cannith's work with using conductor stones to create a barrier, and he postulated he could adapt it to a moving lightning rail coach. Dalus and Alaria travelled to Passage under the protection of Elkavar d'Deneith, and there sold House Orien on developing an experimental engine that could survive threats from the Mournland.

Although the task of perfecting the engine has finally given Dalus freedom from oversight, it has simultaneously revealed faults in his theories. Dalus created and installed the experimental engine, but the elemental he chose has proven all too willful. When not devising new experiments, he repairs and improves the Express. He loves Alaria from afar, and so it's likely to remain until Jarick's fate is resolved.

Hook: Elemental Madness

Dalus has numerous plans for elemental weapons and devices. To power a ritual experiment, he needs a series of lightning strikes to hit the train at precise times. He asks the PCs to help with this secondary ritual, and to then guard him until he can bind the summoned elemental to his will. What could go wrong?

Elkavar d'Deneith, Guard Captain

You do whatever's necessary to protect the passengers, even if it means your life. Don't worry, I'll be right there with you.

Elkavar d'Deneith	**Level 7 Soldier (Leader)**
Medium natural humanoid, human	XP 300
Initiative +3	**Senses** Perception +11
HP 78; **Bloodied** 39	
AC 23; **Fortitude** 20, **Reflex** 18, **Will** 19	
Speed 5	
⊕ **Longsword** (standard; at-will) ✦ **Weapon**	
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 7 damage.	
⸸ **Seize the Good Ground** (standard; encounter) ✦ **Weapon**	
+14 vs. AC; 2d8 + 7 damage, and Elkavar shifts 3 squares to a space adjacent to the target.	
⸸ **Shifting Tactician** (standard; recharge ⚅ ⚄ ⚃) ✦ **Weapon**	
+14 vs. AC; 1d8 + 7 damage, and Elkavar and up to two allies adjacent to the target can immediately shift up to 2 squares.	
Spot the Flaw	
Allies making melee attacks against a target Elkavar is adjacent to gain a +3 bonus to damage rolls.	
Alignment Unaligned	**Languages** Common
Skills Athletics +13, Bluff +13, Intimidate +8	
Str 20 (+8)	**Dex** 10 (+3) **Wis** 13 (+4)
Con 14 (+5)	**Int** 16 (+6) **Cha** 16 (+6)
Equipment chainmail, heavy shield, longsword	

Elkavar was born to an esteemed dragonmarked family of House Deneith, but he never developed a dragonmark like those of his siblings. This shamed him, and Elkavar set off into the Mournland, theorizing that stress and heroism might bring out a mark. He met Dalus and Alaria while resupplying in Stillwater Station, and quickly became fast friends with the Cannith inventor. When Dalus and Alaria left for Passage, Elkavar offered his company, even though no dragonmark had yet appeared. Rather than return to civilization in disgrace however, he had a fake dragonmark tattooed onto his body and lied about its manifestation to house authorities.

Elkavar is the one permanent guard from House Deneith on the Mournland Express. He rides the coach out of friendship and the secret hope that his dragonmark might yet manifest. He also does so to avoid his house's scrutiny by remaining far away from major Deneith holds. Afraid of discovery, he overcompensates with shows of bravado and foolhardy courage. By some luck, his secret has yet to be uncovered.

In spite of generous pay, the guards under Elkavar's command never stay for long. The dangers of frontier travel and passing so close to the Mournland can be taxing on the hardest warrior. Elkavar is always looking for reputable mercenaries to fill out the ranks.

Hook: Marked for Blackmail

Someone is blackmailing Elkavar, and he needs help. He employs the PCs to help him uncover his blackmailer without revealing his secret. If the PCs find out anyway, do they reveal Elkavar's lies to House Deneith? What if his blackmailer is another Deneith scion?

Carts of the Mournland Express

The carts presented here represent the configuration of the Mournland Express as it thunders along the borders of Old Cyre. Due to the modular nature of the lightning rail, all the carts found on the Express might be found on other lines.

Engine Cart

At the very front of the train, beyond a locked door and up a steep set of stairs, the helm platform stands buffeted by the barely leashed winds of Aino, the train's bound air elemental. Broad windows open out past the stabilizing vanes and onto the surrounding lands. Metal grating creaks underfoot. A crackling loop of electricity—the lightning reins—hangs limp, awaiting the next person who dares set his or her will against the bound elemental.

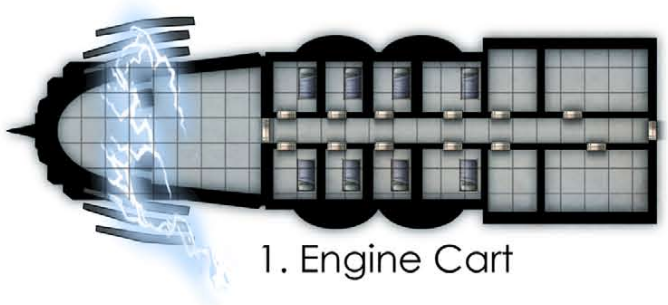
Although confined to the engine, Aino has gained limited awareness of the train and has occasionally been known to exert control. For the time being, Alaria and Aino have come to a power-sharing agreement over the running of the train.

Behind the helm is a series of simple rooms, space enough for a bed with simple linens and a few pieces of integrated furniture, to house the crew. The bulk of the crew's baggage, several replacement conductor stones, and supplies for emergency repair are in the storage compartments at the back of the cart.

An experimental engine pulls the Mournland Express, making it faster and more versatile than the average lightning rail coach. As long as it moves, the engine taps into the power of the conductor stones to create a repulsion field around the train. This field wards off living spells and other creatures that occasionally emerge from the Mournland.

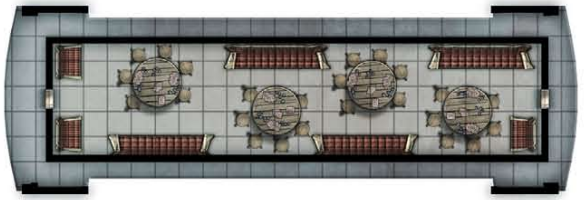
Hook: Broken Bindings

A creature or mage on the train is determined to release Aino from bondage. Do the PCs further or oppose this plot? What are the consequences of unleashing Aino? Given its state of symbiosis with the train and relationship to Alaria, does Aino even seek freedom?

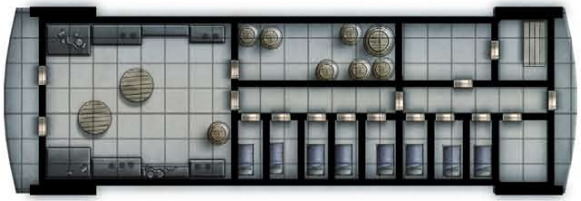


1. Engine Cart

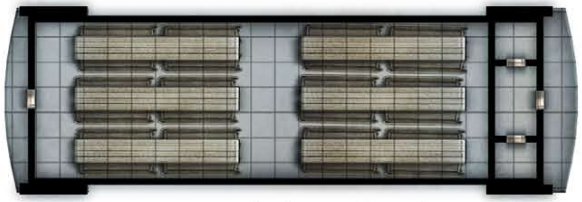
2. First-Class Cart



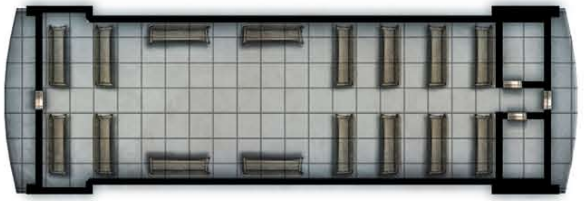
3. Gambling/Luxury Cart



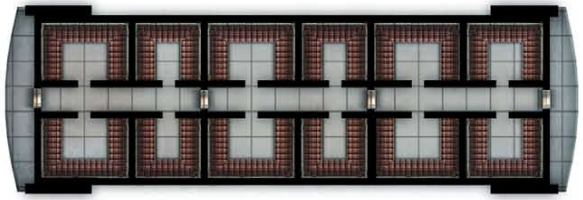
4. Galley Cart



5. Dining Cart



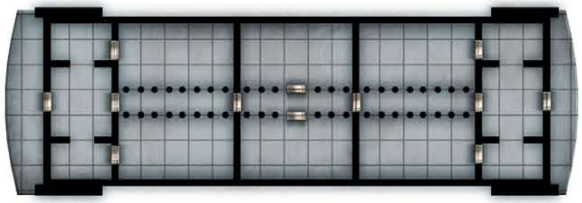
6. Ghost Cart



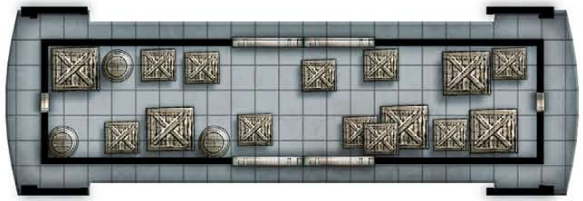
7. Standard Passenger Cart

8. Sleeper Cart

9. Steerage Cart



10. Containment/Prison Cart



11. Cargo Cart

Hook: Breakdown

The train has broken down at the edge of the Nightwood. Is this a normal maintenance problem or sabotage? The PCs must look into the problem and/or secure the area while the train is being fixed. Perhaps the train needs parts, and the PCs must explore the area to locate materials for Dalus to use in the parts' fabrication.

First-Class Cart

Plush chairs, a writing desk, and dining table on one side, feather beds and private bathrooms on the other, the first-class cart is a veritable suite of rooms for distinct, discerning groups of passengers. A maid and butler watch over up to twelve of these well-to-do customers, ensuring that their needs are met for the duration of the journey. The guards keep a special watch on the cart.

Hook: First-Class Villainy

One of the PCs' enemies has taken passage in the first-class cart. The characters have to find a way to confront the villain without harming innocents or face the consequences of reckless action. Perhaps the scoundrel has a plot involving the Mournland Express itself.

Gambling Cart

This luxurious cart is lushly carpeted, filled with soft lighting, and set with gambling and dining tables. A well-appointed bar rounds out the lavish décor. Unless a visitor has an invitation or privileges to come here, proof of the intent and capability to gamble are required for entry. Others cannot make it past the scrutiny of the guards who eye all comers through eye plates in the heavy doors. Those who can't enter must take the walkway that extends around the car.

The burly minotaur twins Dagar and Ragad keep the peace here. Under a separate contract with House Deneith, the minotaurs have duties that end at the doorways of the gambling cart. They are little inclined to act upon anything outside their purview unless it directly threatens them.

Hook: Noble Informant

Balas ir'Krag rides the Express back and forth, gambling away his time and fortune. He knows everything there is to know about the train, but he only talks with those he plays, and he only plays the best. The PCs need to prove themselves if they want to get anything from Balas.

Hook: Heirloom Recovery

Erwin Calanshire, a young merchant, gambled away a valuable family heirloom early in the trip. He no longer has the money to return to the cart and win it back. So he asks the PCs to retrieve the item for him, promising a substantial reward once they reach their destination.

Galley Cart

Flames leap, knives fly, and meat sizzles as Traven oversees a staff of five sous-chefs in the preparation of food for the Express's passengers. The kitchen, with its hanging pots, hot burners, and long countertops takes up fully half the cart. In the other half are a pantry, cold storage, and sleeping quarters for the galley staff. Traven doesn't take kindly to uninvited guests in this cart.

Dining Cart

Long wooden tables and benches run the length of this cart, and diners from the standard passenger cart rub elbows and more as they devour the fare that comes out of the galley. A staff of five normally serves those in the dining cart.

Hook: Murder on the Mournland Express

Somebody has been murdered late at night in the dining car, and a number of passengers and crew is suspect. Lacking an alibi, perhaps the PCs investigate to exonerate themselves. Or maybe the characters discover the victim was important to them in some other way.

Ghost Cart

Sages have said that the Day of Mourning weakened the barriers between the world of the living and the dead. Others proclaim that Dalus's alteration of the conductor stones is a draw to restless spirits, especially in the haunted land of Karrnath. Whatever the cause, when the moon is full and mists gather near the borders of the Mournland, some passengers find themselves passing through a cart that wasn't there earlier. Sometimes such passengers are never seen again.

Hook: Missing Persons

The brother of one of the missing passengers asks the PCs to ride the Express and find out what happened to his sibling. The characters have to board the ghost cart and rescue the lost passengers. Who knows what else they might find within?

Hook: Haunting Witnesses

The ghost cart is a remnant from the Day of Mourning, filled with eyewitnesses to the cataclysm. What secrets might be teased from them before the cart fades away? Could it be that one of these passengers is related to a PC?

Hook: Visitation

One of the ghosts asks the PCs to help it find a way to its eternal rest. This might involve investigating the circumstances surrounding the ghost cart's destruction, gathering testimony from any survivors of the crash, or even recreating the events leading up to the crash and ensuring they work out differently.

Standard Passenger Cart

Doors on either side of this cart lead to identical compartments. Each has cushioned benches, room for six—just enough to stretch if you're friendly—overhead racks for baggage, and windows. A standard cart has twelve compartments and seventy-two seats.

Hook: Protection Duty

The PCs have been contracted to guard an important passenger, such as a witness on his way to a trial or a diplomat on the way to one of the rail's stops. Are the PCs up to the task? Who aboard wishes to bump off the characters' charge?

Sleeper Cart

This cart contains a long, narrow hallway with washrooms at both ends and a series of heavy doors in between. Beyond the doors are bunk beds, each bed with clean sheets, pillows, and a wool blanket. This cart has enough room for every passenger in the standard passenger cart to bed down.

Steerage Cart

Row after row of hard wooden benches and harder metal flooring furnish all the comforts of this cart, allowing up to two hundred persons to be packed within. Depending on the number of passengers, Elkavar assigns up to four guards to watch over the mob and keep them from disturbing the passengers in standard and first-class carts. Making trouble enough for the guards to wade into the press after you is a sure way to spend the rest of the trip one car back, in confinement.

Hook: Rail Robbery

Bandits have taken passage on the steerage cart. They plan to stop the train in the wilderness so their cohorts can ride in and rob the passengers. Can the PCs thwart the plot or, failing that, drive off the bandits while minimizing passenger casualties?

Containment Cart

Rattling chains, the stench of fear, a dagger to the throat, and a barked warning often greet entrants to this cart. Sometimes dangerous creatures or valuable artifacts need to be moved long distances. This cart can be modified to hold anything from hardened criminals to captive wyverns. Whatever the cargo herein, Elkavar takes no chances while this cart is occupied. He tries to keep at least five guards on duty at all times, and they don't welcome curious visitors.

Hook: Escape!

The captives have escaped. The PCs must apprehend the escapees before they wreck the train, simply flee into the wilds or the settlement at the next stop, or accomplish some other evil.

Cargo Cart

This cart can carry anything from excess baggage to trade goods. Truly valuable objects are more likely to ride in the containment cart, but the cargo carts are usually locked. An elevated walkway allows crew members to move around the cart as needed. It also provides space for the guards who keep watch on the back of the train.

Hook: Rail Tax

A Valenar warclan has decided to charge for passage along the border of the Blade Desert, and its members have set up a toll across the lightning rail. They prefer livestock and the like instead of money. Can the PCs negotiate a compromise or show the elves that the Mournland Express is not without fierce defenders?

About the Author

Andrew G. Schneider always wanted to be a wizard when he grew up, but now instead of throwing fireballs, he makes magic with words. An author and freelance game designer, he also serves as Cormyr's writing director in the RPGA's Living Forgotten Realms. His recent credits include LFR's Gangs of Wheloon and Black Steel and Blue Fire, as well as work with a variety of small game studios. Andrew lives in his hometown in the Washington, DC area.

The Monk

BY MIKE MEARLS AND STEPHEN SCHUBERT

Be sure to check out this month's playtest version of the monk class!

Mike: At long last, the monk joins the roster of 4e character classes. I've always loved monks. From the 1st Edition days of 2d4 hit points at 1st level and the nigh-unstoppable grand master of flowers, the idea of a martial artist venturing into the unknown alongside paladins and bards appealed to me.

The biggest, and perhaps most obvious, change is that the monk is now psionic. How, you might ask, did that happen? The monk ended up where it did because the ki power source proved untenable and psionics is the next best fit. The monk in D&D uses martial arts augmented with obviously magical abilities. The class's flavor, ascetics who train their bodies and minds, provides a good template for psionic power.

With that in mind, when you see the rest of the psionic power source, the monk looks different. It's the same reason why wizards use spellbooks and warlocks use pacts, but both are arcane characters. There's an interplay between a class's flavor, its abilities, and its power source. Sometimes, a power source defines parts of a character. In other cases, the class's legacy in the game defines most of it. In this case, psionic defines the monk's place in the world and story, but its legacy as a mobile, unarmed warrior defines its mechanics.

As we worked on concepts for the monk, we found that the ki power source grew thinner and thinner. The monk's central, mechanical conceit, full disciplines (more on those later), didn't lend itself well as the umbrella mechanic for a power source. It functions better for a class that likes to move around in interesting ways, but that doesn't necessarily point to an entire source. Instead, it points to the striker role. That's not a good leg for an entire power source to stand on.

We also didn't want to simply shove all the classes inspired by Asian cultures into one power source for the sake of bundling them together. Frankly, that strikes me as equivalent to piling every class drawn from Western cultures into the same source. Does it make sense to group witches, knights, jesters, and friars into one power source?

The concept of the monk drawing energy from within was a good match for psionics. When we looked at classes like the shugenja, the wu jen, the ninja, and the samurai, we came to similar conclusions in matching them to other power sources. In some cases, like the samurai, we're more excited about using an approach similar to the Dragon articles on gladiators and assassins.

Now, if we have a great mechanical concept for a samurai, we'll run with it, but right now the thinking is that it's more compelling to play a paladin, a fighter, or maybe even a cleric or warden, and place samurai mechanics and options on top of that.

With that in mind, the design approach for the monk demanded something different. Rob Heinsoo came up with the concept of full disciplines, powers that give you options for both your move and your standard action.

Stephen: We wanted the monk to feel like a mobile combatant, and the full disciplines allow us an opportunity to give the monk special movement abilities, hearkening back to the fleet-footed monks of previous editions. Using the full discipline power format, we can let the monk shift 2 squares with a move action, or move a little faster, or jump great distances, all essentially at-will. The movement techniques in the encounter full disciplines open up space for monks that run on water or up walls or even fly.

One challenge presented by the full discipline powers was trying to find ways to let the monk have interesting move techniques without completely overshadowing movement-related utility powers, not to mention other classes that only get an attack in an encounter power, not an attack and a move. Ultimately, we determined that full disciplines are kind of like having interesting movement modes built in as class features, but the player must choose not only which techniques he'll have access to but also must weigh both the movement and attack components of each discipline.

We had to scale back the power level of the at-will movement techniques, and we categorized them into four buckets, which formed the basis for most of the encounter-level movement techniques. Those buckets were essentially: shift 2 squares, move at speed +2, jump really far, and swap positions with an adjacent ally.

Mike: This approach was huge for designing the class. Up until this point, an attack power could grant

only a minor movement effect unless the designer wanted to cripple the attack's offense. Since the monk is a striker, that wasn't much of an option.

With a full discipline, though, we need to bleed only a small part of an attack's hitting power to give it a compelling movement component. Since the power requires your move action, you're already paying most of the "cost" for that move.

Stephen: Once we got into some internal playtesting, we uncovered a conundrum. The full disciplines were restricted to one discipline per round, primarily because we want the techniques to be tied together within a discipline, and thus within a round's actions. The rules initially allowed a character to use the techniques of a full discipline as long as sufficient actions remained. But that allowed a character who used an encounter-level full discipline and spent an action point to get two encounter-level attacks from one use of a power.

Ultimately, we decided to limit the techniques of encounter-level disciplines to once per encounter, but we also allow the monk to switch full disciplines when he uses an action point.

We knew that we'd want the monk to be able to attack non-AC defenses when applying conditions to his target, but we also wanted a monk to have the flexibility to open up a weapon-based build. Generally, AC is 2 points higher than non-AC defenses, and weapon proficiency is designed to cover this gap for weapon users. When a weapon attack gains a proficiency bonus against a non-AC defense, that attack should normally have a lessened effect to account for the increased accuracy. We decided to make the monk's unarmed strike into a weapon that can also be used as an implement (much like the swordmage from the Forgotten Realms Player's Guide). We then extended this feature to all "monk weapons," letting a staff-wielding monk still fit into the paradigm.

Mike: Monks and weapons were a bone of contention at various points of the process. In the end, we decided to focus on the unarmed monk as the standard character, give you mechanics that make unarmed basic attacks viable, and leave the door open for future builds that focus on weapons. The fighting style feats allow you to blend a weapon with your unarmed fighting. I like the idea of a monk that combines a scimitar with kicks and strikes.

Stephen: As a weapon, the unarmed strike is equivalent to a military weapon, so is slightly better than the simple weapons that the monk might otherwise use. We're aware that other weapon users have many options available to increase damage, especially via Superior Weapon Training, so we'll provide the monk some fighting style feats that let him get bigger dice or interesting properties like brutal with his weapon attacks. We'll also use fighting style feats to provide options to those players who want to focus on using weapons instead of barehand attacks. You might see a feat like Bladed Wind Style that would grant bonus damage when you score a critical hit using a scimitar (and make scimitar a monk weapon), or Shielding Whirlwind Style that provides a shield bonus to AC when using a quarterstaff.

Each striker class has some mechanism for increasing damage output, typified by abilities like Sneak Attack, but also including accuracy-increasing mechanics like the avenger's Oath of Enmity. The monk gains Flurry of Blows, which adds a flat damage amount to his primary target but it plays a bit differently. The monk can choose to apply the flurry damage to any adjacent creature, even if that creature wasn't hit by the triggering attack. In fact, if the flurry hits a different target, it gets even better, gaining either a slide effect or a damage boost. As the monk levels, he gets the ability to hit more than one target. Since the flurry attack requires no attack roll of its own, it might open up some interesting opportunities in play. Of course, it also rewards the monk for the precarious situation of being adjacent to more than one target, so hopefully his mobility will be able to keep him from getting smacked down too often.

If you haven't done so already, be sure to check out this month's playtest version of the monk class!

About the Authors

Mike Mearls is the Lead Designer for the Dungeons & Dragons® roleplaying game. His recent credits include H1: *Keep on the Shadowfell*™ and *Player's Handbook® II*.

Stephen Schubert works for Wizards of the Coast as the lead developer for the Dungeons & Dragons game. He has provided development and design work for many 4th Edition D&D products, including the *Monster Manual®*, *Player's Handbook 2*, and *Monster Manual 2*.

Hybrid Characters, Part 2

BY ANDY COLLINS

Last month, we posted a playtest version of a new character-building option slated for release in *Player's Handbook* 3: the hybrid character. Thanks to your feedback, we've improved the hybrid character rules, now available for your perusal. We've also added the eight classes appearing in *Player's Handbook 2*, meaning that the number of hybrid combinations available for playtest jumps from 56 to a whopping 272!

Designed to let you mix two classes together more thoroughly than the existing multiclass system, the hybrid character system represents a bold experiment for *Dungeons & Dragons*. Character classes aren't designed to be broken down and recombined like building blocks, so this new system presents a plethora of potential pitfalls.

We also believe, however, that the benefits to be gained are equally great. Perhaps you seek to craft a character backstory or persona that the current class system can't supply. Or maybe you're just looking for a unique combination of features and powers that let you feel different from everyone else at the table. The point is, hybrid characters offer a freedom that doesn't exist elsewhere in the current edition of *D&D*.

Origins of the Hybrid System

The idea for this system has been brewing since the late stages of development on the 4th Edition ruleset. At the time, some folks — both inside and outside of R&D — felt that the multiclass rules in the *Player's Handbook*didn't go far enough in allowing you to mix and match two different classes. They wanted a more aggressive multiclass system, with more trading of powers and features between classes.

As one of the defenders of that multiclass system, I empathized with those folks even as I resisted their calls for a looser system. I knew quite well that for players used to previous editions of the game — where blending two, three, or even five different classes was a common occurrence — the new multiclass system would feel extremely restrictive and limited.

But that was exactly what we wanted and needed at such an early point in the game's life. The 4th Edition structure of roles and classes was so new and different that we were obligated to move slowly in presenting workarounds and exceptions to that structure. We needed everyone, designers and players alike, to learn the intricacies of the new class structure, including the extraordinary flexibility offered within each individual class via powers, feats, and paragon paths, before we started really messing around with it.

The multiclass system of the *Player's Handbook*, therefore, represented only our first tentative step toward adding cross-class building options. The hybrid character system is the next step ... and it's a pretty big one, as many of you have pointed out in your playtest feedback!

Feedback and Changes

In one form or another, we've been playtesting the hybrid character rules for over two months. After some initial internal tests to work out major issues, we unleashed the rules in March on a squadron of approximately 100 playtesters coordinated through the RPGA. These folks diligently tested some pretty rough rules and set us straight in a few places where we'd been too aggressive or too conservative.

Then, in early April, we posted the next iteration of the ruleset for all *D&D Insider* subscribers to read and try in their games. Over the intervening weeks, we've collected and reviewed your playtest feedback, resulting in the new hybrid character rules now available on *D&D Insider*. The four most notable changes are described below.

Hit Points and Healing Surges: The earliest iteration of the hybrid rules divided each class's hit points and healing surges precisely in half, allowing players to round down after adding them together.

In a stunning example of a place where simplicity wasn't welcome, I lobbied to round down before the addition, theorizing that this would make the system easier to use. Well, it probably did, but the cost of 1 hp

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every level for all those characters normally gaining 5 hp per level was too much to ask.

You told us loud and clear that you didn't mind a little rounding, so the new version of the rules restores the original design: hybrid clerics and rogues gain 2.5 hp per level, not 2. Other odd-numbered hit point and healing surge values are treated the same way.

Hybrid Talent: In the earlier playtest document, this feat let you pick up any class feature you were missing from either of your classes.

We knew at the time that this solution wouldn't be the final one. The sorcerer, for instance, only has one "class feature," which actually encompasses a number of separate benefits. It had the advantage of being close enough and extremely simple to use, so we chose to playtest a suboptimal solution to see what you said.

You rightly pointed out that this option was too potent for many combos, allowing characters to duplicate most (or even all) of a single class's features while still gaining key features from a second class.

The new Hybrid Talent feat is nearly identical to the earlier one, but instead of simply pointing you to the original class features, it directs you to a list of options for each class. In some cases, these options exactly reproduce class features. Other features (such as the warlord's Commanding Presence) are reduced in efficacy when they become hybrid talent options. Still other features simply don't appear at all: the only way you can get a spellbook is to be a single-classed wizard.

The system's more complex now, but I think it's worth it for the finer degree of control we have over what hybrid characters can pick up with a single feat.

Armor Proficiencies: We expected this to be one of the thorniest issues of hybrid characters, and your feedback confirmed it.

Restricting a hybrid character to the worse of his two lists of armor proficiencies didn't make a lot of you happy, particularly those would-be fighter/wizards.

This restriction, however, was a direct result of the early RPGA playtest, when hybrid characters got all the armor proficiencies from both classes. Too many players reported combos where characters willingly, even enthusiastically, gave up class features to gain several extra armor and shield proficiencies. Even though it hurt, we had to give up that benefit to avoid creating a system where a small number of hybrid combinations simply outshined all the others.

This new version of the rules, however, adds an option for every armor-wearing character: Instead of using the Hybrid Talent feat to pick up a class feature (or a hybrid version of a feature), you can use it to gain all the armor proficiencies of one of your classes.

That means that your fighter/wizard can pick up leather, hide, chain, and scale armor (plus light and heavy shields) at the cost of a single feat.

We understand that some folks will still object to this feat cost. To those players we suggest that the multiclass system may be more to their liking. A fighter who picks up one or more wizard multiclass feats gets to keep his full armor and shield proficiencies while still enjoying the fun of dabbling in arcane spells.

Paragon Hybrids: If a paragon-level multiclassed character can choose to forgo her paragon path to increase her dedication to that secondary class, it made sense to allow a hybrid character to do the same.

The new hybrid rules now allow you to gain additional powers from either of your classes in place of a paragon path. It also grants your character a bonus Hybrid Talent feat, even if you've already taken it once. So far, this is the only method for a character to gain more than one hybrid talent option, so it wouldn't surprise me to see plenty of folks giving it a shot.

What's Next?

We're still interested in your feedback on the hybrid character system. We're committed to publishing a robust and playable system that allows you to blend character classes in exciting ways. Your comments and questions will help us meet that goal.

Send your playtest feedback to dndinsider@wizards.com.

Thanks for all your valuable contributions to the future of *D&D*!

If you haven't done so already, **be sure to check out the updated playtest version of hybrid characters!**

About the Author

Andy Collins co-designed the 4th Edition Dungeons & Dragons game, and works for Wizards of the Coast as the Manager of Development and Editing for RPG R&D. His credits stretch back a decade and include *Magic Item Compendium*, *Draconomicon*, *Unearthed Arcana*, and the *Epic Level Handbook*.

Bear With Me, Part 2

BY SHELLY MAZZANOBLE
illustrations by William O'Conner

Oso de la Fez! Now that you're a real bear, what are you going to do first?

"I'm getting a Facebook page!"

"I'm ignoring Oso's friend request," Sara told me. "We're not friends in real life, we're not friends on Facebook."

I should have asked her to clarify which of her lives she was calling real, but instead I scolded her blatant display of smug species-ism.

"Look at you, Miss Maxed Out. Someone thinks she can have too many friends," I said. Especially friends brought to you by shady soul-swapping.

"I ignored him too," Marty said. "I only accept real friends."

Weird, considering I'm Facebook friends with both of his cats.

It was only days before when Rob and I spent over an hour fleshing out Oso's past, present, and future. Turns out with his new history, Oso could easily land an ingénue job on a soap opera. And with his new future, Rob and I should seriously consider writing for one.

"First, he needs to shrink," Rob said.

And I'll probably need to see one after this, but that's a different story.

"Sure, Oso won't mind shrinking. Small price to pay," I say, laughing. "Get it? *Small* price?"

Rob got it, but wasn't as amused. What can I say? I pun when I'm nervous, and I'm nervous about what I had signed on for.

"Now when he's in passive mode, Tabitha can keep him in her pocket or inside her robe," Rob explained.

"Actually Tabitha prefers to wear him like one of those teddy bear backpacks. It's much more practical this way than taking up valuable pocket space. And that way he can hold things for her. Cell phone, keys, plastic bags."

"Plastic bags?"

"Got to keep the Shadowfell beautiful!"

"He can't have a bike though," Rob said. "Too mechanical for D&D."

Hmm . . . animals really need to something to keep them engaged to prevent destructive behavior. Besides, Oso really loved his bike.

"How about a rubber ball?" I asked. "He really enjoys balancing on things. Like d20s."

Rob lit up like a sunrod in dungeoncrawl space. "We'll give him an orb to cruise around on when he's in active mode. He can fly around his targets and hover there like a dire mosquito."

This made for a cute visual, which Rob enhanced by humming a little ditty while doing an impression of Oso jogging on his orb.

"What's with the fez?" he asked. "Can he take it off?"

"Good question. He never has," I said. "Maybe it's his security blanket. Or maybe it's like Bret Michaels's bandana and he's trying to hide the fact that he's balding."

"Perhaps it's what fuels his revenge," Rob said, writing something down. "He likes to have a visual reminder of where he's been and who made him suffer."

"And he'll keep wearing it until all show bears are freed!"

"He's stored years of power in the fez," Rob added.

"And when he gets in his opponent's face he does a little song and dance."

"So ironic considering his past!"

"And finishes with a tip of his hat."

"Like he's issuing a silent hello."

"Or panhandling."

"And you can't help but be charmed by this tiny, hovering ex-show bear's performance."

"So you dig around in your pockets for silver pieces."

"And when you look up—"

"You're dead!" I concluded triumphantly

"Yesssssssssssss!"

"Well maybe not dead. But pretty bummed out."

I think I'm getting the hang of this R&D business.

One thing I know about bears is their attempt to move a predator to a more comfortable distance is called a "bluff charge." I suggest we work that into his powers somehow.

"He's stored years of power in the fez," Rob added. "And when he gets in his opponent's face he does a little song and dance."

"If that doesn't work, a mauling probably would."

"Good idea. Tabitha could get +2 on Intimidate checks thanks to Oso's constant benefit."

For an active benefit, we toss around the idea the ability to grant Tabitha the power of Oso's orb, but Rob thinks we can do one better.

"We'll give him speech as an active benefit and let him speak any language you know."

"Still pretty impressive for a bear."

"And he can issue a warlock's curse as a minor action."

"Oh! Tabitha always wanted to curse someone!" It's like she's always standing behind the paladin going, "*Yeah! What she said!*"

"And . . . like all bears, Oso doesn't take well to being disturbed, so he deals immediate damage to any opponent who attacks him and misses."

I wonder if this includes verbal attacks. If so, Oso needs to learn about "sticks and stones," and Maya and Anwar need to learn how to bite their tongues.

Rob, deep in thought, tapped a pencil against his temple. And then he issued the following as a side note:

"Oh, and he's going to defect one day."

"Excuse me?"

"Remember what I said about consequences. Besides, you already agreed to the terms."

"Turning on the Wyld Stallyns wasn't part of the terms!" I shouted. Then again . . . "Was it?"

"I didn't say *who* he would turn on. Maybe he'll turn on the townspeople who threw peanuts at him when he performed. Maybe he's the mastermind behind a malicious plot. Or maybe he's programmed to turn on the people who love him. The important thing is you won't know when or how. Just that it's coming."

That's the important thing? Not that I may have just signed on to kill off my entire group because my wizard didn't want to pick a familiar out of the book? And okay, maybe one that was a little more powerful than the ones in the book. . . . I'm okay with authentic surprises, but I hate anticipated surprises. Jack-in-the-boxes terrify me for that very reason, and I haven't played a game of hide-and-seek since I was six years old and my cousin sprayed Easy Off in my face when I discovered her in the laundry room. I was *it*! I was *supposed* to find her!

"Brilliant, isn't it?" Rob said.

"Did you know cocker spaniels are prone to a strange form of dementia that causes them to attack their masters?" I asked.

"No."

"And it can be slowed with medication. So maybe the same is true for Oso?"

Rob shakes his head. "No medication has been proven to help. And he'll be totally cognizant."

"Fine," I said. I could make this work. "Maybe he gets made fun of too many times by drunks and insular so-called friends and one day will wreck havoc on a local tavern. After everyone's gone home, of course. Tabitha will be so mad when she finds out she has to pay for the damages."

Rob smiled. "Cute, but you won't know what his trigger is. We'll leave that to your DM."

Oh woe! This is worse than I thought.

"I don't know about that. I'll have to get New DM's buy off." I said this hoping Rob might believe New DM runs our game with such a tight fist he'll never go for the chance to land a TPK at the hands of an ex-show bear familiar I forced on the group.

"Oh, I'm pretty sure he'll agree," Rob said.

Right. They know each other.

At the end of our hour, Oso's transformation was mostly complete, barring the finishing touches Rob promised to do on his own.

"Remember," Rob said, backing out of the Shadowfell, "One day his bluff charge won't be a bluff!"

"Wait!" I called after him. Last ditch effort time. "How about we go the way of the Velveteen Rabbit and bring Oso to life by Tabitha's pure, unconditional love? That's way cooler than some dubious pact with malevolent spirits, right? Right?"

"Love? Ha!" he laughed, leaving me and my unconditional love alone in the Shadowfell. Was this some kind of eerie foreshadowing?

After 10 minutes of New DM's cackling, I picked up *Monster Manual 2* and threaten to beat him over the head with it.

As I feared, he had no qualms about using Oso and his Red Fez of Doom.

"So I get to not only determine what Oso's trigger is, but exactly what dastardly deed he he's been plotting?" New DM asked. You could practically see his cold, steel heart beating through his shirt. "What a lovely gift."

As I feared, he had no qualms about using Oso and his Red Fez of Doom.

"You don't have to use it for evil, you know?" I explained. "Maybe Oso has been developing an antidote to cure poison damage, or he's been working on a documentary exposing the harsh reality of enslaved animals traveling with burlesque shows."

"Or maybe he bites the hand that feeds him." This sends New DM into another long fit of giggles, and I really do throw the book at him. Good thing I fail my Athletics check.

"I can't believe I used to think you smelled good."

"Alright," he said trying to be serious. "Let's think about this. So Tabitha will show up one day with 30% less soul and a teddy bear backpack. Neither of which her party will probably notice."

"Well, yeah, but when Oso is in active mode everyone can see him," I added. "Now if Sara and Marty ignore him, they're just being rude."

"Why would dear, sweet Tabitha do this?" New DM asked.

Unfortunately I know the whole story. Here's the deal:

Tabitha is not close to her parents. Her mother was a boring socialite and her dad made his fortune in fur trading. Always an animal lover, Tabitha fervidly opposed her father's line of work. Tabby tried to rescue animals, sometimes right out of her father's slaughterhouse, and treat them as if they were beloved pets. But her efforts didn't matter. Her father always found out and made her return them.

Refusing to take one dime of his blood money, Tabitha put herself through Aldwyns Academy for Wizardry by working at a sketchy—but lucrative—traveling burlesque show. There she met Oso, and she saw her one chance to make up for all those animals she wasn't able to save. She knew she would do anything within her power to give Oso the life he deserved. Until one day she learned the only thing that could save him was outside of her power.

"Wow," New DM said. "That's got True Hollywood Story written all over it. I almost feel bad for her."

"Bad enough that you'll—"

"Oh, not *that* bad," he said, nearly bursting into giggles again. "She made an unfortunate deal and someone has to pay for it."

I know all about having to pay for bad deals. I got ripped off on eBay once trying to buy some Mookie Wilson baseball cards for my brother. The dealer sent me Carmen Fanzone instead and promptly canceled his email account and all traces of his existence on eBay.

"You know that thing people always ask if bears do in the woods?" I asked. "They don't. They do it in your rucksacks. Sorry about those trail rations."

We determine that Tabitha found this so-called bad deal by scouring the Shadowfell's version of Craig'slist. She came across an open call posted by an exarch.

Looking for a great investment opportunity? Look no further! We are actively seeking souls and partial souls in exchange for favors. Who doesn't have a little soul to spare? You give us a slice of your inner being, and we grant you your deepest, darkest desire. All souls considered! Serious inquiries only. Warlocks strongly encouraged to apply.

Big whoop, Tabby thought. *Souls are for wussies.*

"Ahh..." New DM sighed. "Someone forgot to read the small print."

"Who has time for that?"

New DM picks up an art order, which he pretended was the alleged small print: *Offer subject to retribution. For a limited time only, favor will no longer act of it's own volition and will be controlled by an indomitable force with a questionable agenda. No notice will be given when or where favor will be redeemed.*

"I'm calling the Attorney General," I said, leaving New DM to his maniacal giggles.

"While you're at it, call back that Nigerian prince who's trying to get a hold of Tabitha. There's a large sum of money involved. It's extremely urgent!"

When game day rolled around, we finally got our chance to see what the real Oso was made of (when not plotting our imminent demise). Instead of placing my Oso mini on the sidelines next to Darrin (Tabitha's stalker ex-boyfriend), the hunting cougar (Darrin's new, somewhat older, girlfriend) and Astrid (who offers encouragement and innocuous commentary like one of those judges on "America's Got Talent") I picture him rushing the playmat like the Kool-Aid man bursting through a high school science classes.

"Oh yeah!"

"Smell something?" Marty asked, flapping his hand up and down over his nasal area.

"Like bad salmon," Sara agreed. "Disgusting."

"You know that thing people always ask if bears do in the woods?" I asked. "They don't. They do it in your rucksacks. Sorry about those trail rations."

The game picks up with us duking it out in Umbraforge Tower with a dark creeper who has a penchant for disappearing, his wraith companion, and a couple of peppy shadar-kai with spiked chains who can skip through the room like a pair of rhythmic gymnasts.

Tabitha was already down 15 hit points from taking a beating last week. But she's inspired by Oso's eagerness to play.

"Oso de la Fez, activate! Form of . . . a tiny, yet intimidating, flying ex-show bear in a fez!"

"Oops," Sara said. "Tabitha dropped her backpack."

Oso's going to drop her, I thought. But not yet. Instead he sails on up to the dark creeper.

"Tabby uses her minor action to place a curse on this chump," I said. She also tosses out a *magic missile* so Oso wouldn't think she was getting lazy now that he's here.

"Can familiars flank?" Scott asked, moving Teemu closer to Oso and the dark hunter.

"Nope," said New DM.

"Can Oso?" I asked.

"Still nope," New DM repeated.

"I thought maybe Oso was impervious to that decree. You know, because of his sudden extreme awesomeness." I looked at Sara when I said this.

"Can they die?" she asked, looking at me. "You know, because I stab them?"

By the time my turn came around again, half the group, including Tabitha, was engulfed in darkness thanks to the pesky dark creeper. She could move away easily enough but instead used her minor action to direct Oso to place the curse on one of the shadar-kai.

"You're practically blinded," Marty found necessary to remind me. "You could have moved one

square and gotten out of the darkness instead of letting your imaginary bear do your dirty work."

"Oso has bigger plans," I told him. "Tabby can handle a little nighttime."

She casts *scorching burst* for good measure.

A few more rounds left all of us a little banged up. Tabby took an additional 18 points of damage. The shadar-kai apparently didn't like Oso and Tabby's tag team attack, and he fired back at Tabitha dealing a whopping 14 points.

"She's down!" I shouted. "Negative 1!"

"At least she has something soft to land on when she gets knocked prone," Marty commented, referencing Oso's return to backpack mode. Just when he was having so much fun. You could practically hear him whine, "Oh Mom! Just 5 more minutes!"

Tabitha failed one death save before Anwar made his way over and dumped a healing potion down her gullet. Good thing she sleeps with her mouth open.

We eventually knocked off one of the shadar-kai and the dark creeper, but the last chainfighter proved to be stubborn. Even though it was bloodied, that didn't stop it from going to town on Sara's dragonborn, Maya.

"That's 17 damage," New DM told her.

"That hurts," she said. Maya was well into the single digits.

Tabitha got up, dusted off her robes and sprung Oso into action to curse the mulish shadar-kai. *Shock sphere* . . . crit! Oso jumped up and down in excitement, which accidentally knocked his fellow party members prone.

"Oops, sorry guys. He's tiny but he's dense. Lots of muscle."

The crit damage from the *shock sphere* wasn't enough to kill the shadar-kai, but the additional damage from Oso's curse was exactly enough.

"Not too shabby," Scott said. "For his first time."

"That's right!" Oso shouted, thumping his chest in Maya's face. "Can you see me now, Scaly Pants?"

Sara brushed him off. "Whatever. I so could have handled that, Oso."

"Might be kind of hard from a prone position," said Marty. "Welcome to the Wyld Stallyns, Oso."

"As much as Oso would like to bask in your retribution," I said, "he has some important business to tend to. See you punks later."

Oso de la Fez is waiting for New DM to pull his trigger.

About the Author

Shelly can't stop making illegal familiars and fancies herself the Pied Piper of the Shadowfell—minus the whole drowning rats and kidnapping thing.

Oso the Circus Bear

Oso keeps the patter steady as he runs through the air on the orb he uses as a magic circus ball. If he decides he doesn't like you, he rolls up to you, does a little song and dance and tips his fez. But beware! The fez is mightier than the sword! Ouch!

Speed 4, fly 6 (hover)

Constant Benefits

Grrrrrr: You gain a +2 bonus on Intimidate checks.

Active Benefits

His Own Bear: Oso can speak any language you know, and can converse with other creatures. Unlike mere familiars, you can't hear everything Oso hears and says unless Oso lets you, and you would never be able to tell Oso what to say.

Pact Bear: As a minor action when Oso is in active mode, you can place a curse on one target in a square adjacent to Oso. Until the end of the encounter, your attacks deal an extra 1d6 damage to that target, exactly as the warlock's curse ability on page 131 of the *Players' Handbook*. At 11th level, you deal an extra 2d6 damage to a cursed target, and at 21st level, you deal an extra 3d6 damage.

Verrrry Dangerous: Oso deals 1d10 damage to anyone who attacks him and misses. At 11th level, he deals 2d10 damage, and at 21st level, he deals 3d10 damage.

Return of Demogorgon

BY BART CARROLL AND STEVE WINTER

This month, Monster Manual 2 unleashes a veritable horde of monsters into the game, from returning favorites to entirely new critters. While we could not look back at each one of those returning from past editions (behir, iron golem, bullywug—we salute you), we did want to present something of a retrospective on the MM2's cover monster: the monkey-headed, tentacle-armed Prince of Demons himself—Demogorgon.

On the Use of Demons

Personally speaking, my own deep enjoyment of the game's first monster manuals came from their eclectic, almost encyclopedic, listing of creatures from such a wide mix of genres. D&D's creators did not limit themselves to including just the monsters they created out of whole cloth; instead, they mined a vast array of resources, statting out creatures from legend, literature, medieval bestiaries... *as well as* their own creations. Even the creators' toys influenced the game, a set of Japanese plastic monsters becoming the canonical rust monster and bulette. According to Steve Winter, these toys were sold at the Ben Franklin store next to the Dungeon Hobby Shop in Lake Geneva well into the 1980s. He believes the owlbear, umber hulk, and carrion crawler may even have come from this store as well.

For a kid that loved (and really, what kid didn't love) monsters, dinosaurs, Greek mythology, and knights—a book that collected them all together, added new creations, and let you play with them in game... what could possibly be better? I'm not ashamed to admit that the 1st Edition Monster Manual allowed for a secondary activity as well: the book's black and white illustrations were ready made for a kid like me to color in.

A brief mention here of the general inclusion of demons and devils in the game's bestiary. We need not get into the hyperbolic outcry regarding their inclusion, 2nd Edition's renaming conventions (or circumventions), or their return in 3rd Edition forward. Considering D&D's creators left almost no source unexplored in order to populate their game with creatures, it's no wonder they also brought along the demons and devils of literature and theology. And really—in my opinion—it's a fine thing that they did, for this reason alone: the fouler and more dangerous the opponents in the game, the more heroic the player characters are allowed to become.

And who could be fouler, more dangerous, than fiendish Demogorgon!

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DEMOGORGON IN THE GAME

Demogorgon entered the game—along with his chief rival, Orcus—in Supplement III: Eldritch Wizardry, written by Gary Gygax and Brian Blume. It's unclear how his distinctively horrible appearance came about—if there was ever literary reference to a double monkey-headed demon, or if this was entirely the inventors' creation. Granted, Appendix D of the 1st Edition DMG allowed random physical combinations for creatures of the lower planes: monkey-likes heads and tentacle-arms could be derived, but not the two headed feature of Demogorgon:

It is contended by some that this demon prince is supreme, and in any event he is awesome in his power. This gigantic demon is 18' tall and reptilian. Demogorgon has two heads which bear the visages of evil baboons or perhaps mandrills with the hideous coloration of the latter named beasts. His blue-green skin is plated with snake-like scales, his body and legs are those of a giant lizard, his twin necks resemble snakes, and his thick tail is forked. Rather than having arms, he has great tentacles. His appearance testifies to his command of cold-blooded things such as serpents, reptiles, and octopi.

Actual literary references to Demogorgon, however, can be found in such various texts as Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*, even a mention in *Moby Dick*. It's well worth taking a look at his origins, as well as those of other such fiends familiar to the game—in various sources, Demogorgon has a palace in the Himalayas and holds council with the genies of the world. Orcus has his own literary connections, his name having evolved into Tolkien's "orcs." And Asmodeus, over on the devils' side of things, appears in stories of Solomon and his mystic ring.

Demogorgon's game stats changed little in his next appearance in 1st Edition's *Monster Manual*, with his heads hypnotizing a vast number of lesser beings, his forked tail lashing as a massive whip, and his tentacles able to grab and rot opponents; add to that, a wild array of other powers and abilities: *continual darkness, charm person, create illusion, cause fear, levitate, detect magic, read magic, read languages, detect invisible objects, ESP, dispel magic, clairvoyance, clairaudience, suggest, water breathe, polymorph self, wall of ice, charm monster, telekinesis, feeblemind, project image, power word stun, symbol, turn sticks to snakes*, and (phew!) *gate* in other demons (possibly to the cries of "You know we're billing you overtime for this," and "We were told there'd be cake!"). He was, by most estimates, the toughest demon in the Monster Manual by a fair margin and arguably the toughest thing in the whole book. Only Asmodeus could stand up to him, and smart money would probably still be on Demogorgon. Orcus and Baalzebul came in a reasonably close 3rd/4th, but Orcus would have been smoked without his wand of death.

In 3rd Edition, Demogorgon appeared in a number of sources, including the *Book of Vile Darkness* (where his monkey heads oddly transformed into hyena heads), *Fiendish Codex I*, as well as being gloriously depicted on the cover of *Dragon* Magazine #357 and statted within by James Jacobs.

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In the 4th Edition *Monster Manual 2*, Demogorgon not only returns to take on the players—but with the two sides of his personality taking on each other as well. As explained in his lore:

Arcana DC 22: Demogorgon's two heads are named Aameul and Hethradiah. Aameul prefers deception, and Hethradiah favors destruction. Originally, Demogorgon had one head and one mind. A mighty blow from the deity Amoth split him nearly in two before Demogorgon killed Amoth. After he healed, Demogorgon's head remained split. The two heads often disagree with one another but turn disagreement to their mutual advantage. For instance, one head struck an alliance with a powerful lich queen of the deep Shadowfell, and the other killed her to steal her powers.

Arcana DC 37: Twins born to cultists or kidnapped and indoctrinated at a young age lead Demogorgon's mightiest cults. Each twin serves one of Demogorgon's two personalities. Invariably, such a cult falls to infighting as one high priest turns against the other, hindering many a foul plot.

A RIVAL THROWDOWN

From their mutual introduction in *Eldritch Wizardry*, Demogorgon and Orcus have long feuded. "Rivalry between demon lords is great, but the enmity between Demogorgon and Orcus is immense and unending." In 4th Edition, Orcus appeared first, on the cover of the *Monster Manual* and presented within as a Level 33 Solo Brute (Leader). In the *MM2*, Demogorgon now appears as a Level 34 Solo Controller.

Demogorgon and Orcus accidentally ran into each other (in our case, at opposite ends of the Black Dragon lair map, as we also used the Gargantuan Black and Blue Dragon minis as stand-ins), who would win in a cage fight?

Choosing randomly, Chris was assigned Demogorgon. I was assigned Orcus.

In this match, Demogorgon rolled twice for initiative, resulting in both rolls higher than Orcus. In his first round (Hethradiah's), Demogorgon moved forward and used *inescapable grasp* to successfully teleport Orcus within 5 squares. He then tried to use *Hethradiah's gaze* as a minor action, but rolled an 11 (46 total, less than Orcus's 49 Will defense). On his second turn (Aamuel's), Demogorgon tried to use *dual aspect of Demogorgon* to knock Orcus unconscious, but rolled a 1.

On his turn, Orcus activated within range for Demogorgon to take a free shot with *gaze of abyssal*

One punch, and Orcus knocked his rival straight back to the Abyss!

While our current *Creature Competition* (with our final round being voted on right now) did not involve open combat between the entrants, let's consider that question between Orcus and Demogorgon. If push comes to shove (comes to raining deadly blows upon each other's head or heads), who do you think would win in a fight between these demon princes?

Less an exact mechanical experiment and more a philosophical debate (as monsters are not designed to fight each other), Chris Youngs and I, Bart Carroll, decided to play out this rivalry at the game table. If

might, but Demogorgon only rolled a 2. Orcus then moved forward to use *touch of death*... and rolled an 18 (51 total, beating Demogorgon's 46 Fortitude defense). That dropped Demogorgon straight to 0 hit points. One punch, and Orcus knocked his rival straight back to the Abyss!

Take that, monkey heads!

In your own version of this challenge, you might play these two as originally presented, or you might reconfigure Orcus closer to the newer solo monster design tenets: give him 20% fewer hit points, -2 defenses, but also increase his damage output by 50% when bloodied. Either way, if you do recreate this challenge, we'd love to hear about it at: dndinsider@wizards.com.

As a side note, Chris Youngs and I have our next challenge already lined up: Ancient Red vs. Ancient Gold Dragon!

About the Author

Bart Carroll is loathsome beyond description and has no redeeming features. His body resembles that of a huge, bloated buffalo and gives off an offensive odor. The author's neck is long and thin, and perched atop it is a big head uglier than that of a warthog. His legs are thick and stumpy, much like a hippopotamus. The author's tail is strong and snakey, however, and moves with amazing swiftness to strike enemies.

Steve Winter is a writer, game designer, and web producer living in the Seattle area. He's been involved with publishing D&D® in one form or another since 1981. Tiny people and monsters made of plastic and lead are among his favorite obsessions.

Summer Events Heat Up with New Content!

BY CHRIS TULACH

illustrations by Eric L. Williams

This summer, we'll be adding some real value to your convention-going experiences and providing a number of new offerings for existing programs that you can take advantage of in your own backyard. Here's what you'll see from Organized Play in the next few months.

My Realms Adventures

Living Forgotten Realms

When: Late May 2009

What It Is: My Realms adventures are an exciting new opportunity for DMs to customize their group's play experiences. Every quarter or so, we'll release a new My Realms adventure, which is essentially a template that you can use to create your own Living Forgotten Realms adventure. Inside each adventure packet, we'll have story hooks for your use, sample monsters to fight, and rewards to hand out when your adventure's done. As long as you follow a few basic rules, you can use or discard material presented when creating your adventure. Best of all, the characters that participate earn XP, gold, and magic items just like they would in other Living Forgotten Realms games! This is your opportunity to share your creativity with your home group or create a tailor-made experience for your PCs.

Ultimate Dungeon Delve

Convention Delve

When: Major national conventions all summer long, starting with Origins (June 25-28)

What It Is: Are you a part of one of those groups that loves pushing the envelope on the Convention Delve, trying to be as efficient as possible and post

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the best time? Then this event is for you! This year, we present a new Delve experience — the Ultimate Dungeon Delve! Bring your own team of 6th-level characters created with the D&D Character Builder and see if you can make it through six encounters without taking an extended rest. Prizes awarded to teams that manage to finish all six encounters in the time allotted. New Ultimate Delves will premiere at Origins and Gen Con Indy this year. More information will be available on our website starting in June about character creation for this event. (We will still be offering the Classic Convention Delve experience as well at participating shows.)

Adventuring Company Events

Living Forgotten Realms
When: Gen Con Indy 2009 (August 14–17), then open to public play only soon after
What It Is: Bring your Living Forgotten Realms adventuring company to participate in the first event designed specifically to test your company's mettle! Called *Jungle Hunt*, your team travels to Chult to try to bring down the biggest beast you can and win the biggest purse from the Amn merchants sponsoring the excursion. Win fame and glory for your company! More information will be available on the Living Forgotten Realms site as the convention approaches.

Embers of Dawn Mini-Campaign

Living Forgotten Realms
When: Premieres at Gen Con Indy 2009 (August 14–17)
What It Is: The *Embers of Dawn* mini-campaign is a low-level, six-adventure story arc set in Returned Abeir. Specifically created as a springboard for new characters, the first adventure of the monthly series premieres at Gen Con Indy this year. Start a new character native to Tarmalune or any of the other Windrise Ports, and play through these tightly linked adventures (levels 1–4). All the adventures are two rounds and a new adventure will be released each month, concluding with the mini-campaign finale at D&D Experience. More information will be available on the Living Forgotten Realms site as the premiere approaches.

Of course, we have lots more planned for the summer shows, like a revised D&D Championship and a full slate of Living Forgotten Realms adventures, but we'll save those updates for another time. Until next time defenders, don't forget to mark!

New Living Forgotten Realms Adventures Releasing This Month

Check out the latest adventure offerings from D&D Organized Play!

IMPI1-4 *Bandits on the Farm*
A small farming community is being forced to give up its harvest to protect itself from bandits. You can protect the people if you can persuade them that they will be safe after your intervention. A Living Forgotten Realms adventure set in Impiltur for characters levels 4–7.

TYMA1-4 *Death Before Dishonor*
A secret cabal seeks an artifact of unknown power in the ruins of ancient Unthalass. Unfortunately, the only dragonborn in all of Djerad Thymar with the knowledge to stop them has been declared outcast by his own House. Can you trust one who has already proven himself untrustworthy long enough to keep the relic out of the grasping hands of the cabal? A Living Forgotten Realms adventure set in Tymanther for characters levels 4–7.

CORM1-4 *Black Steel and Blue Fire*
What is a man touched by the Spellplague? A wonder to a scar pilgrim from the Vilhon Wilds, an object of horror or pity to a native of Cormyr, or just another opportunity for profit to an Amnite merchant. Ask the man himself, though, and he will say a man touched by the Spellplague is a man alone. A Living Forgotten Realms adventure set in Cormyr for characters levels 7–10.

DALE1-4 *The Lady in Flames*
Fey creatures wreathed in blue flames have been leaving the Spiderhaunt forest to harrass the citizens of Shadowdale. Lady Ulphor requests that you delve into the forest and retrieve or destroy the source of their newfound powers. This adventure is the second part of the *Byar's Seven* major quest, which started in DALE1-2 *Blades for Daggerdale*. A Living Forgotten Realms adventure set in the Dalelands for characters levels 4–7.

About the Author

Originally thought to have been raised from a humble Midwestern family, **Chris Tulach** actually fell to Earth in a meteorite-shaped capsule flung from a planet far outside our galaxy. While under the yellow rays of Sol, Chris's nerdity far surpasses that of any normal human. Using this precious gift only for good, he has become the **RPGA** Content Designer

Monster Month

BY BILL SLAVICSEK

Hey. How's everybody doing? This month, Monster Manual 2 releases, and I thought I'd share something from Dungeon Master's Guide 2 (due in September) in celebration of one of my favorite things about D&D—monsters! Why do I like monsters so much? Because I love being the Dungeon Master, and monsters make being the DM something special. Whether it's old classics with a new twist or brand new nightmares that you can use to surprise the players, monsters help make every dungeon chamber and wilderness encounter more exciting. Before I get to this new tidbit (which deals with Monster Themes), I have a few other topics to cover. Let's dive right in.

Officially Core

In case you missed the memo, or if we haven't been as clear as I think we have (which is a distinct possibility), I wanted to make sure I put this out there for *D&D Insiders* everywhere to read and digest. (Readers are kind of like gelatinous cubes in that regard.) Everything that appears through the online magazines that make up part of your *D&D Insider* subscription is official *D&D* material and part of the core rules of the game. For the first time in the history of *D&D*, the gatekeepers of *D&D* creative content (namely, myself and my R&D team) oversee all creative expressions of *D&D*. If it appears in a novel or a physical game product or in an issue of digital *Dragon* or *Dungeon*, it goes through the same process. It gets concepted or approved as a concept by my team. It gets designed by my team or by a freelancer (which includes new freelancers submitting material through the digital magazines for the first time). It gets developed by my team (which means it undergoes rigorous testing and power balancing and other mechanical adjustments). It gets edited by my team or by a freelancer. It goes through a final check (usually by me or one of the managers on my team). And then it finds a home in a product or a digital magazine. That makes everything you see here official and core. That was one of the goals for the new edition of the game, and I love the way the process has come together.

Full-Time Wizard

I'm not sure how this fits into the monster theme, but what the hey. Over the course of a couple of columns, Shelly Mazzanoble drove many of you to near-emotional responses with her wickedly sincere and heartily amusing mock-interviews with me and my team as she tried to get hired into a pretend job that she titled "Player-in-Chief." Let me assure everyone that Shelly is still gainfully employed here at Wizards, continuing her role on the *D&D* Brand Team and as a part-time columnist for *Dragon Magazine*. I have also heard the many hues and cries (or at least a couple of near-shouts that Shelly forwarded to me), and I have decided to act upon them. So, starting immediately, I'm accepting Shelly's mock-application for the mock-position of Player-in-Chief. She's always welcome down in R&D, at our gaming tables, and even on our computer screens whenever we read her latest words of wit and wisdom. And now she can also represent you, the players, as your semi-kind-of-official Player-in-Chief. Welcome aboard, Shelly! (Now where's my cake?)

Test Drive

In case you haven't seen it yet, check out our new **D&D Test Drive**. It provides Quick-Start Rules, an adventure, and the demo edition of the *D&D Character Builder* so that you can start playing *D&D* right now. If you have any friends out there that still haven't given the new edition of the game a try, point them to the **D&D Test Drive**. We've made it easy to try out the new edition of the game and see how it works in actual play. Send the link to a friend today.

Monster Month

Monster Manual 2 comes out later this month, and it's full of monsterish goodness. Frost giants, Demogorgon, new oozes, rust monsters, and more fill this tome of horrors with all kinds of new challenges for adventurers from 1st level to 30th level. This product

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coincides with the second *D&D Game Day* of the year, taking place around the world on May 23rd. Check out this link for additional details.

Also releasing this month, look for *Monster Manual: Dangerous Delves*, the first in our new line of *D&D Miniatures*. Designed specifically for Dungeon Masters, this set of 40 brand-new sculpts is sold in booster packs of five figures—one visible Large mini with four random minis included. There are eight visible minis in the set, and each case contains one of each of those packs. With just monsters in every pack, and stat cards drawn directly from the Monster Manuals, these boosters provide a great way for DMs to expand their monster collections.

Last week, we sent out the news that we're hard at work on the next application for *D&D Insider*. We're currently calling it **Campaign Tools**, and among the many features it will eventually contain is a cool monster and encounter builder tool kit to make the DM's work even easier when planning and creating adventures. This one is still a little bit in the future, but I wanted to mention it as part of my celebration of Monster Month.

And speaking of celebrating, let's get onto the *Dungeon Master's Guide 2* material I mentioned at the top of the column ...

Monster Themes

Many of the iconic monsters of *D&D* come in themed groups or varieties, from packs of slavering gnolls to the deceptive rakshasas. These creatures share not only physical traits, but also tactics and even powers. Encounters with these creatures take on a distinctive flavor because of these shared characteristics; a battle with gnolls feels different from a fight with hobgoblins or drow.

Using the monster themes presented here, you can add that same distinctive flavor to any array of creatures, from servants of Demogorgon to a platoon of devil-trained soldiers. Each theme provides story-based and mechanical changes that modify existing monsters to better fit the flavor you've chosen. For example:

A troglodyte curse chanter whispers a blasphemous prayer to Demogorgon and brings madness to her enemies.

The proximity of Telven Vale to the Feywild imbues many of its denizens—including a tribe of ogres—with powers of stealth and trickery.

Kobolds dedicated to Tiamat ignore the streams of acid that drip from the ceiling of their accursed temple . . . and unleash their own acidic breath upon unwary intruders!

Each monster theme begins with an explanation of the theme, then presents a suite of options for customizing the monsters. These options include story-based changes—such as alterations to a monster's appearance or behavior—as well as mechanical adjustments in the form of new powers and skill modifications. Finally, each theme includes a sample stat block showing how you can customize an existing monster by using the theme.

You can use these themes to modify existing creatures, to tweak your own creations, or to serve as the seed of an entirely new monster.

Using a Monster Theme

Applying a monster theme is a straightforward procedure that takes only a few minutes. You don't even need to rebuild the monster's stat block—you can run the monster with a few extra notes jotted in the margin that detail its new powers.

Step 1: Choose a Theme

By the time you're thinking about this idea, you've probably already picked out a theme that works for your campaign. But if you don't see one that fits, you can craft one easily.

Step 2: Choose a Monster

After you've selected the monster theme, pick out the monster you want to modify. You can use the text of the monster theme to help you pick out a monster that's appropriate for the theme, or just choose a monster that's right for the encounter or adventure you're writing.

Keep in mind that some themes work better with particular kinds or roles of monsters, and within the theme each power describes the roles it fits best. For example, the Demogorgon theme works well with brutes, because many of the new powers described under that theme are designed to fit those monsters. You can choose to modify a lurker or soldier with one of these powers, but keep in mind that the modified monster is going to end up feeling a bit like a brute. This doesn't change the monster so much that it can't fulfill its original role, so you shouldn't change its role designation.

One exception: If you give a monster a leader power, the monster gains the leader role.

Step 3: Choose Story Changes

A theme is more than a menu of new powers. It also has a story template that you can use to turn a mundane creature into a unique opponent.

It's easy to forget about description and story elements when assembling a monster's statistics and powers, but story plays an important part in how a monster functions in a game. A monster without a good story is merely a pile of numbers, and that frequently leads to forgettable encounters or adventures.

When adding a theme to a monster, note how its appearance or behavior changes. These changes should reflect not only the monster's altered powers, but also its new allegiance to a specific deity, primordial, or other villainous master.

This step could just as easily occur after choosing the new powers, or even simultaneously—whatever works best for you. In fact, some powers might suggest particular story alterations, and vice versa, so don't be afraid to jump back and forth between these two steps.

Step 4: Choose Powers

After selecting the theme, the monster, and any story-based changes, you need to choose the powers to add.

Choose one attack power and one utility power from the theme and add those to the monster's stat block. Avoid the temptation to pile on new powers. Adding more than a couple of new powers to a monster not only makes it more complicated (and slow) to run in combat, but it also risks increasing its power beyond its normal level.

You can also apply the skill modifications appearing in the theme description, though this isn't necessary.

Attack Powers: Each theme includes a number of different attack powers. Some are new at-will attack powers, while others are per-encounter or recharge-based enhancements to the monster's existing basic attacks. In some cases, powers in this category don't include an attack, but instead enhance the monster's offensive prowess in other ways.

Each power is written in the style of a normal monster power entry, followed by explanatory text that describes appropriate roles for the power and story hooks to consider adding to the monster along with the new power.

Utility Powers: In addition to attack powers, each theme also includes options that don't involve attack rolls or directly deal damage, such as beneficial auras, healing powers, special movement options, situational benefits, and so on.

In most cases, adding a utility power doesn't alter a monster's core identity or tactics as drastically as adding a new attack power. However, exceptions to this do occur and are noted in the option's accompanying text.

Demogorgon Cultist

One of the mightiest of demon lords, Demogorgon is a two-headed fiend who embodies madness and absolute destruction. The Prince of Demons commands his followers to engage in wanton destruction, laying waste to all that they find.

Demogorgon finds most of his adherents among troglodytes, kuo-toa, ogres, and other savage humanoids given to mindless, destructive violence. His human cults arise in times of chaos, when brute strength and blood lust allow even the weakest peasant to survive and, in the madness of battle, flourish. Other creatures that might align themselves to Demogorgon's cause include ettins, trolls, giants, titans, the occasional aberrant monster, and of course, demons. Worshipers of Demogorgon keep beasts such as drakes or otyughs as pets, and particularly vicious magical beasts—even rare dragons—might throw in with a cult dedicated to this demon prince.

Brutes, controllers, and skirmishers make the best Demogorgon-themed monsters. Some powers in this theme upgrade the monster's melee prowess, while others exemplify the madness inherent in the Demon Prince's cultists.

Creatures with these powers display bestial, even inhuman characteristics, such as forked tails or even tentacles instead of (or in addition to) arms. Extraordinarily dedicated followers sometimes boast two heads.

Demogorgon appears in *Monster Manual 2*, along with a number of related monsters.

Skill Modification: +2 bonus to Intimidate checks.

Attack Powers

Demogorgon's cultists favor overwhelming force, preferably delivered quickly, to defeat their enemies. His priests enjoy magic that twists and turns their enemies' minds, unleashing their inner fury at the priest's command.

Death Fury

Death fury turns melee-oriented monsters into ravening terrors of pure damage. The power is ideal for a brute or a soldier and is well suited for monsters with few other attack powers. You might try giving it to a troglodyte mauler so that it can mark multiple characters each round while bloodied even as it accelerates its own demise by drawing more attacks.

Death Fury (minor; usable only while bloodied; encounter)
Until the end of the encounter, this creature can make two melee basic attacks as a standard action, each with a -2 penalty to the attack roll. After this creature uses *death fury*, the only attack powers it can use until the end of the encounter are basic attacks.

Dominating Glare

This power is ideal for a controller or a creature that enjoys being surrounded by enemies. An oni night haunter, for example, might dive into battle before unleashing a *dominating glare*.

Dominating Glare (standard; recharge ⚅) **Psychic**
Close blast 3; targets enemies; level + 3 vs. Will; the target is dominated until the end of this creature's next turn.

Lashing Tentacles

When added to a melee-based monster, this aura slightly increases its damage output. For a monster that favors ranged attacks, it serves as a useful incentive for enemies to keep their distance. Try applying this theme to artillery, brutes, or controllers. An ogre warhulk with *lashing tentacles* growing from its shoulders makes for an imposing—and potent—foe, particularly as it wades into the middle of the party to subject multiple characters to the aura.

Lashing Tentacles (**Fire**) aura 1; any enemy that enters or starts its turn in the aura takes 2 fire damage.
Level 11: 4 fire damage.
Level 21: 6 fire damage.

Maddening Strike

Maddening strike works best for brutes and controllers that are likely to be in the thick of melee. An immolith can use its reach to deliver a *maddening strike* against one character adjacent to another.

Maddening Strike (standard; encounter)
This creature makes a melee basic attack. If the attack hits, the target makes a melee basic attack as a free action against a creature of this creature's choice.

Utility Powers

These powers favor large groups of melee combatants.

Carnage

Give this power to brutes, skirmishers, or soldiers that fight in teams, allowing them to grant each other the bonus. Kuo-toa guards with *carnage* can seize the PCs' attention when they gang up on the characters.

Carnage
This creature gains a +1 bonus to melee attacks if one or more of its allies are adjacent to its target.

Demonic Frenzy

A monster with *demonic frenzy* should spend plenty of time in the middle of combat. Pair it with multiple brutes or soldiers (specifically leaders) to maximize the effect. An ogre warhulk with *demonic frenzy* surrounded by a bunch of ogre savages makes a tough encounter!

Demonic Frenzy aura 5; any bloodied ally within the aura gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls.

Dual Brain

Though useful for any monster, *dual brain* is particularly helpful for elite and solo monsters—or any monster with a low Will—since it prevents them from being taken out of the fight for long by such mental effects. This feature manifests physically as a second, mostly vestigial head sprouting from the monster's shoulders. Two-headed barlguras with *dual brain* are tough to slow down with mental effects.

Dual Brain
At the end of this creature's turn, it saves against charm effects, dazed, and stunned.

Threatening Reach

A Large or Huge brute or soldier can influence a wider swath of the battlefield with this feature. This ability typically manifests as long, sinewy limbs that look like tentacles. A squad of ogre thugs with *threatening reach* can create an effective wall between the characters and a villain.

Threatening Reach
This creature can make opportunity attacks against any enemy within the reach of its melee basic attack.

Ettin Spirit-TalkerLevel 12 Elite Controller (Leader) of Demogorgon
Large natural humanoid (giant) XP 1,400

Initiative +6 **Senses** Perception +17
Demonic Frenzy aura 5; any bloodied ally within the aura gains a +1 bonus to attack rolls.
Lashing Tentacles (**Fire**) aura 1; any enemy that enters the aura or starts its turn there takes 4 fire damage.
HP 252; **Bloodied** 126
AC 28; **Fortitude** 27, **Reflex** 21, **Will** 26
Saving Throws +2
Speed 6 **Action Points** 1

Club (standard; at-will) **Weapon**
Reach 2; +17 vs. AC; 1d8 + 7 damage, and the target is pushed 1 square.

Curse of Shattered Bone (standard; at-will)
Ranged 10; +15 vs. Will; the next time the spirit-talker hits the target with a melee attack, the attack is treated as a critical hit and deals 1d12 extra damage. The curse lasts until the end of the ettin spirit-talker's next turn.

Spirit Call (standard; recharge ⚄ ⚅) **Necrotic**
Close burst 5; +15 vs. Fortitude; 2d6 + 6 necrotic damage, and the target slides 3 squares.

Double Actions
At the start of combat, the ettin spirit-talker makes two initiative checks. Each check corresponds to one of the ettin spirit-talker's heads, and the ettin spirit-talker takes a turn on both initiative counts. The ettin spirit-talker has a full set of actions on each of its turns, and its ability to take an immediate action refreshes on each turn.

Dual Brain
At the end of each of its turns, the ettin spirit-talker saves against dazed and stunned conditions and charm effects.

Alignment Chaotic evil **Languages** Giant
Skills Intimidate +10, Religion +12
Str 25 (+13) **Dex** 10 (+6) **Wis** 23 (+12)
Con 22 (+12) **Int** 13 (+7) **Cha** 15 (+8)
Equipment hide armor, 2 clubs

Encounter Group

An ettin spirit-talker leads a disparate warband of cultists devoted to the two-headed demon prince. They roam the countryside destroying all in their path.

Level 13 Encounter (XP 4,200)
✦ 1 ettin spirit-talker (level 12 elite controller)
✦ 1 hill giant (level 13 brute)
✦ 2 kuo-toa skirmishers (level 12 skirmisher)
✦ 1 mezzodemon (level 11 soldier)

In Case You Don't Know Him

Bill Slavicsek's gaming life was forever changed when he discovered Dungeons & Dragons in 1976. He became a gaming professional in 1986 when he was hired by West End Games as an editor. He quickly added developer, designer, and creative manager to his resume, and his work helped shape the *Paranoia*, *Ghostbusters*, *Star Wars*, and *Torg* roleplaying games. He even found some time during that period to do freelance work for D&D 1st Edition. In 1993, Bill joined the staff of TSR, Inc. as a designer/editor. He worked on a bunch of 2nd Edition material, including products for Core D&D, *Dark Sun*, *Ravenloft*, and *Planescape*. In 1997, he was part of the TSR crowd that moved to Seattle to join Wizards of the Coast, and in that year he was promoted to R&D Director for D&D. In that position, Bill oversaw the creation of both the 3rd Edition and 4th Edition of the D&D Roleplaying Game. He was one of the driving forces behind the *D&D Insider* project, and he continues to oversee and lead the creative strategy and effort for Dungeons & Dragons.

Bill's enormous list of credits includes *Alternity*, *d20 Modern*, *d20 Star Wars*, *Pokemon Jr.*, *Eberron Campaign Setting*, the *D&D for Dummies* books, and his monthly *Ampersand (&)* column for *Dragon* Magazine.